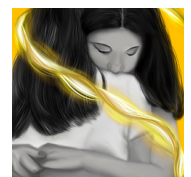
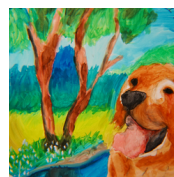
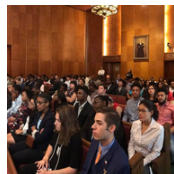
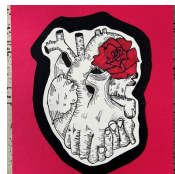
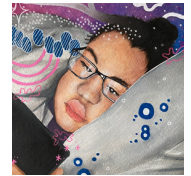




ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT

MAYOR'S OFFICE OF
EDUCATION AND YOUTH ENGAGEMENT



Message from the Mayor's Office of Education & Youth Engagement

Over the last few years, Houston has faced unprecedented times, including a global pandemic, national mental health crisis, and natural disasters. Yet, amidst the uncertainty and disruption, we continue to work together to develop new ways and design new solutions to strengthen our community. One of the office's top priorities is to empower children, youth, and young adults and we are pleased to provide this report as evidence of all the great work we have done to accomplish just that.

The Mayor's Office of Education and Youth Engagement has contributed to systemic changes this past year in ensuring that young people - especially those furthest from opportunity - receive the resources needed to reach their potential and follow their dreams.

The office is proud of the work that we are doing and the progress we have made. The academic achievement, mental health, and social and emotional well-being of our city's young people will remain our top priority.

Overall, the Mayor's Office of Education and Youth Engagement is committed to empowering young people in Houston and ensuring that they have the resources and support needed to succeed. Despite the challenges we have faced in recent years, we remain steadfast in our commitment to the city's youth and will continue to work towards a brighter future for all.

Message from Director Jankovska

Houston has taken the initiative to empower its younger residents under the guidance of Mayor John Whitmire. The Mayor's Office of Education and Youth Engagement (MOEYE) was launched in 2016 with the aim of providing children and youth in Houston with access to a diverse range of opportunities.

But it's not just about access – Houston's youth are vital members of the community, and the city seeks their input on programs that promote a safe, equitable, just, inclusive, and youth-responsive Houston. MOEYE works to ensure that young people's rights, needs, voices, and priorities are heard and integrated into public policies, programs, and decisions at both the city and community levels.

To achieve this, MOEYE has established three core principles: communication, collaboration, and coordination, all of which prioritize the needs and interests of Houston's youth.

MOEYE's innovative approaches and unwavering dedication to our city's children and youth have made a significant impact, setting a shining example of what can be achieved when the community comes together to support its future leaders.



OLIVERA JANKOVSKA

Director of Education &
Youth Engagement

Table of Contents

2	.....	Message from the Office
3	.....	Message from the Director
5	.....	Office Overview
7	.....	Demographics
8	.....	Year at a Glance
9	.....	Career Development
21	.....	Early Childhood Education & Development
28	.....	Extra-Curricular Activities
40	.....	Mental Health Resources
53	.....	Nature & Outdoor Connection
64	.....	School & Community Engagement
72	.....	Youth Engagement
85	.....	Youth Leadership Opportunities
92	.....	Impact in Complete Communities

Office Overview

Launched in 2016 and expanded in 2022, the Mayor's Office of Education and Youth Engagement is firmly committed to empowering children, youth, and young adults from cradle to career. The office focuses on three key strategies: collaboration, communication, and coordination.

Collaboration



Coordination

Communication



Prioritize collective impact partnerships to develop city-wide educational strategy. Analyze research and data to identify and support best practices and align policies and resources across sectors and government entities.

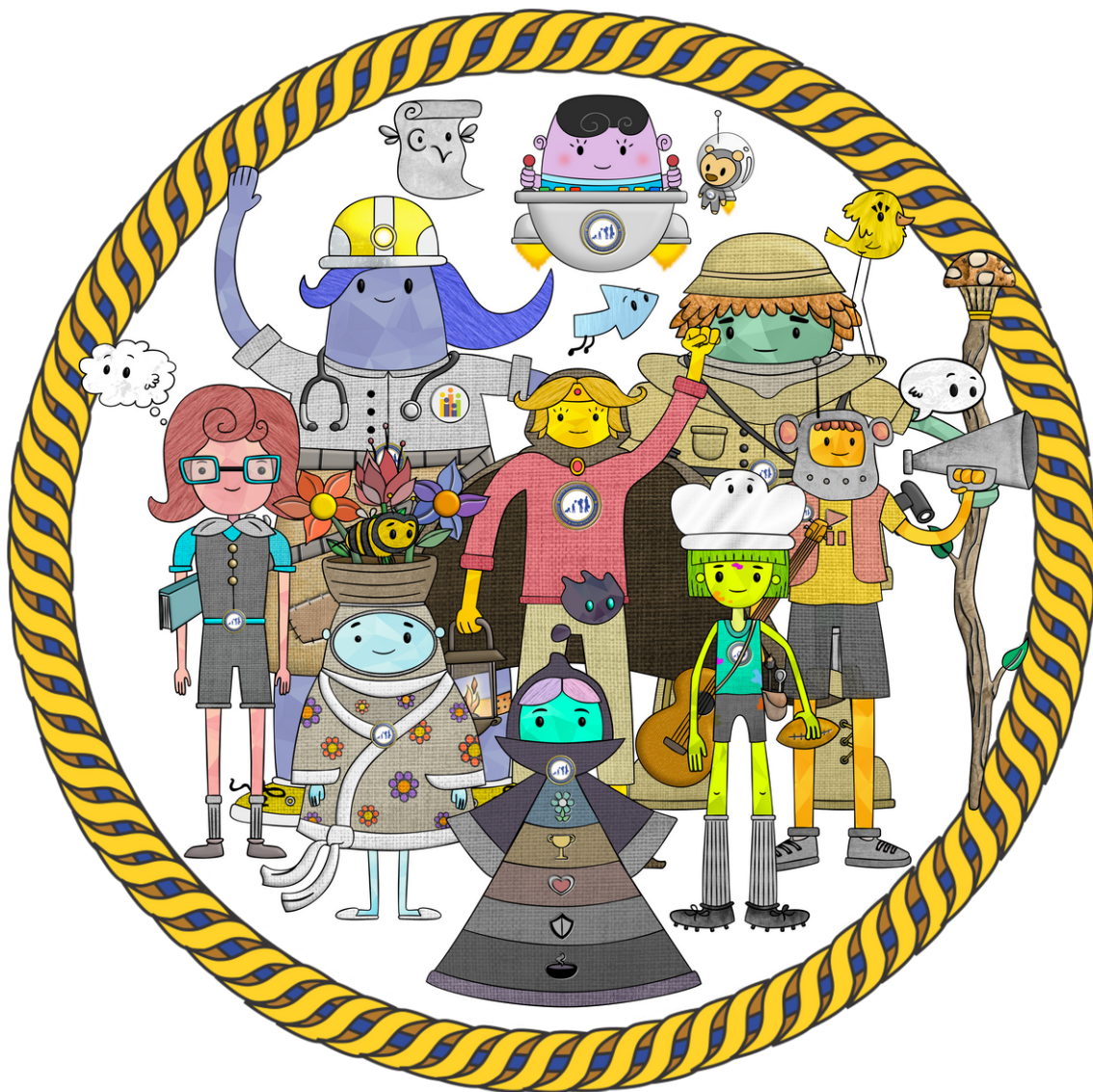


Communicate and maintain relationships with early childhood education centers, school districts, post-secondary institutions, and private, public, and governmental entities to promote opportunities that empower young people.



Coordinate efforts within the city to create a city-wide clearinghouse of quality low-cost/no-cost resources, support the city's internal educational initiatives, and ensure all associated programs are high quality and constantly improving.

In 2023, the Mayor's Office of Education and Youth Engagement created a team of nine characters to communicate the city's programs and resources. Each character represents one of the nine main areas under the Mayor's Office of Education and Youth Engagement, and has a smaller companion character related to their theme. Guidelines and processes are essential to ensure proper communication and execution, but they can also be dull. That's why the office designed the M.O.E.Y.E. Team to make education fun and inspiring. These characters deliver information and news in creative ways, and you'll see them throughout with their corresponding pillars. Let the M.O.E.Y.E. Team keep you informed and entertained!



Demographics

The demographics of Harris County showcase a remarkable pattern of growth. With an estimated population of approximately 4.7 million in 2021, the county has witnessed a substantial 17% surge from the 4 million residents recorded in 2011. This growth surpasses both the national average and statewide growth. Recognizing the implications of this growth, particularly for children and families, underscores the critical need to ensure accessible resources and services that cater to their evolving requirements.

Census data shows that Harris County has had a significant increase in child population since 2020. Harris County has an estimated child population of 1,189,013. For Houston, the 2021 Census provides a revealing snapshot of the age distribution within the population, highlighting the presence and significance of children. Among the populace, children under the age of 18 emerge as a noteworthy demographic, constituting around 23.3% of the total count. Delving deeper into this cohort, distinct brackets come into focus, each contributing to the overall fabric of the community.

Children under 5 years of age compose 7.2% of the population, 5 to 14-year-olds form a substantial portion at 13.5%, and the age group of 15 to 17 years represents 3.9% of the population.

7.2%

of Houston Population
Under 5 Years of Age

13.5%

of Houston Population
is 5 to 14-years-old

3.9%

of Houston Population
is 15 to 17-years-old

Year at a Glance



\$100,000,000+
Invested in Education



20,000
Paid Internships
Offered



1st
UNICEF Child Friendly
City in the U.S.

932

At-Risk Youth
Provided Up to Four
Free Clinical Care
Visits



921
Free or Reduced
Cost After- and
Out-of-School
Opportunities
Identified

120

Laptops
Awarded to High
School Seniors



4
Tuition-free and
Year-round
Preschools
Opened

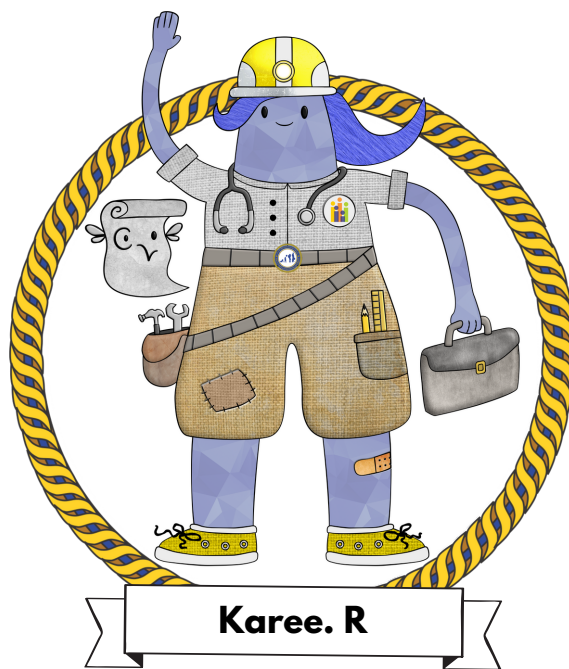
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Career Development

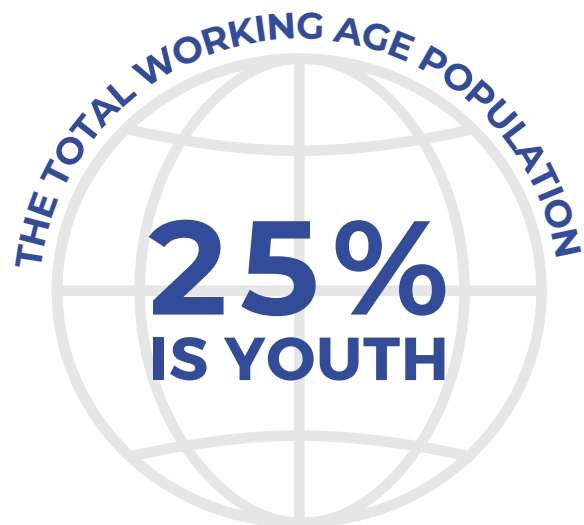
Houston's dynamic economy presents a rich tapestry of opportunity, yet many of our youth face barriers to meaningful employment that can unlock this potential. Recognizing this, the Mayor's Office of Education and Youth Engagement, along with committed partners, is spearheading efforts to build bridges between classroom learning and the workforce, enabling young Houstonians to make informed career choices.

Our city's future shines brighter when our youth thrive educationally. It's clear: their academic success is Houston's heartbeat. As such, we're tackling the opportunity gap head-on. Early work experiences are not just beneficial; they're foundational, leading to higher pay, financial literacy, and saving habits that benefit both the individual and the community.



Karee is very ambitious. She dreams of doing big things and building a great career. At times, she can feel overwhelmed from all of the career paths to choose from and from the challenges of navigating through the professional landscape. Fortunately, she has a lot of tools at her disposal, and she understands that sometimes building a career is more like a jigsaw puzzle than a straight path. The challenge is part of the fun!

There is a growing deficit in meaningful employment and career exploration opportunities hindering young people's ability to gain the skills required to harness the potential of Houston's dynamic economy. The Mayor's Office of Education and Youth Engagement, in collaboration with our dedicated partners, understands the pressing need for a collective, community-driven solution to tackle this multifaceted challenge.



The future prosperity of Houston is undeniably linked to the educational success of our local youth. There is perhaps no greater predictor of the health and well-being of our city than the educational level of our population. It's a fact that underscores the urgency of our mission. Our youth deserve educational opportunities that bridge the gap between classroom learning and the demands of Houston's ever-evolving workforce, empowering them to make informed choices about their future careers.

Today, many young people face formidable odds. While the job market shows signs of improvement, there's an alarming opportunity gap for our youth. Studies reveal that those who enter the workforce early are more likely to secure quality, higher-paying jobs later in life, with positive ripple effects on financial literacy and a propensity to save and invest.

Effective career development programs have proven their worth by positively influencing long-term outcomes. Some programs have not only reduced criminal justice involvement but also decreased mortality rates, improved school attendance and graduation rates, and expanded professional networks, contributing to the development of critical "soft skills."

BENEFITS OF YOUTH EMPLOYMENT



Initiative



Timeliness



Income



Dependability



Networking

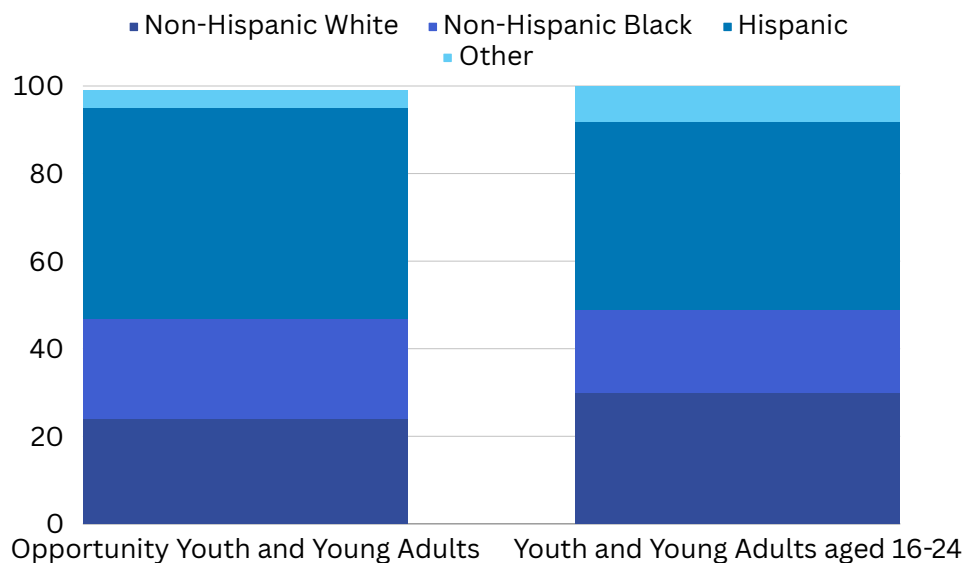
Young individuals without stable jobs in their early twenties face a higher risk of prolonged unemployment and permanently diminished earnings, emphasizing the long-lasting effect of early work experience on socioeconomic mobility. Research further demonstrates that high school students working moderate hours during their senior year earn an annual income 22 percent higher than their non-working counterparts six to nine years later.

Those who are neither in school nor working face higher risks of adverse outcomes, including reduced educational attainment, poorer health, and increased involvement in the criminal justice system. Defined as young people aged 16 to 24 who neither work nor attend school, the Opportunity Youth and Young Adults population is steadily growing, both nationally and in the Houston area.

The immediate burden felt by these opportunity youth extends to society as a whole, resulting in lower economic growth, reduced tax revenues, and higher government spending. Estimates suggest a lifetime taxpayer burden of \$235,680 and a lifetime social burden of \$704,020 per opportunity youth.

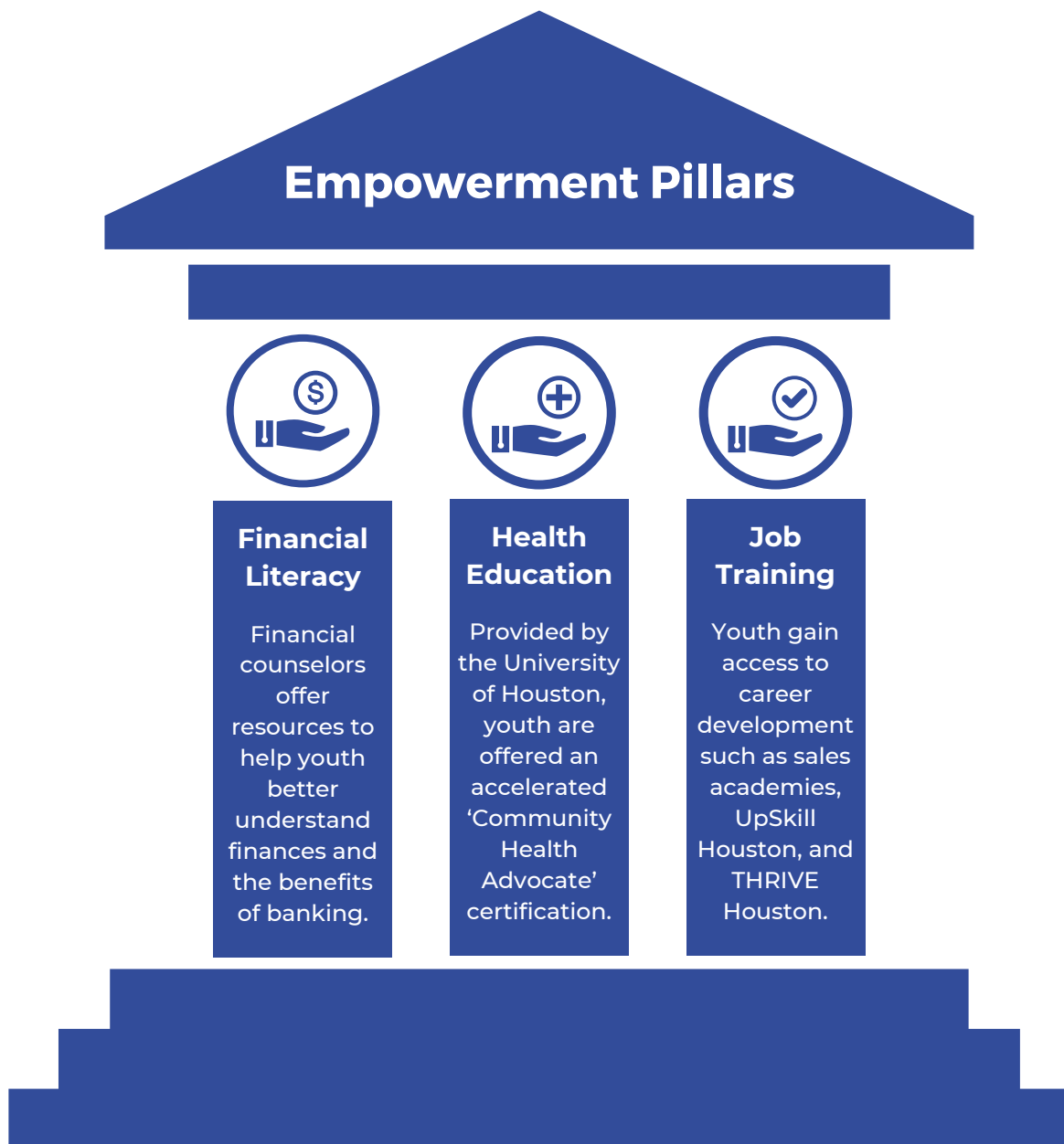
In the Houston area, Opportunity Youth and Young Adults represent 14.2 percent of individuals aged 16 to 24. Alarming, nearly one in seven young adults in the Houston area is neither working nor in school.

Of this population, approximately 78 percent hold a high school credential or higher but are neither in school nor working, while 22 percent lack a high school credential. The majority, approximately 73 percent, fall between the ages of 20 and 24. More than half, at 54 percent, are female.



Disconnection from education and employment is both a consequence and a cause of poverty. Compared to their peers, Opportunity Youth and Young Adults are more likely to reside in households with an annual income below \$25,000.

Addressing this multifaceted challenge demanded a comprehensive approach, and in April 2016, the City of Houston took a significant step forward by launching the Hire Houston Youth program under the auspices of the Mayor's Office of Education and Youth Engagement. Hire Houston Youth was conceived as the pivotal link connecting youth to local employment opportunities, affording them an "earn and learn" experience within Houston's dynamic economy.



This program offers youth aged 16-24 invaluable eight-week paid summer jobs and internships across various sectors, including the City of Houston, the public sector, private businesses, and philanthropic organizations.

Hire Houston Youth provides valuable work experience for youth and benefits for participating employers. Employers gain access to a trained workforce, business and nonprofit resources, and tax-credit benefits while connecting with challenging-to-reach communities and youth. The program emphasizes supporting small and medium-sized businesses through its job board, which grants access to a diverse pool of over 40,000 young adults seeking employment and growth opportunities.



For youth, the program enhances soft skills, provides job experience and salary, expands social networks and capital, and creates opportunities for deeper learning, fostering stronger engagement with the local workforce and economy.



To ensure the program's effectiveness and address any challenges faced by participants, a comprehensive survey was distributed to Hire Houston Youth participants, yielding over 5,000 valuable responses. These responses provided critical insights into the youths' experiences and identified barriers that hindered their employment opportunities, such as limited access to business casual or professional attire and transportation challenges.

In response, an innovative tool powered by FindHelp was developed to assist participants in overcoming these obstacles. By simply entering their zip code into the website, youth can access this tool, conveniently located within our resources tab, to search for free and reduced-cost services in their area, spanning areas like transit, medical care, food, housing, and more. This tool significantly eased the process of connecting interested youth and young adults with the vital assistance they require. The resources featured on the zip code search tool include the services listed to the right.



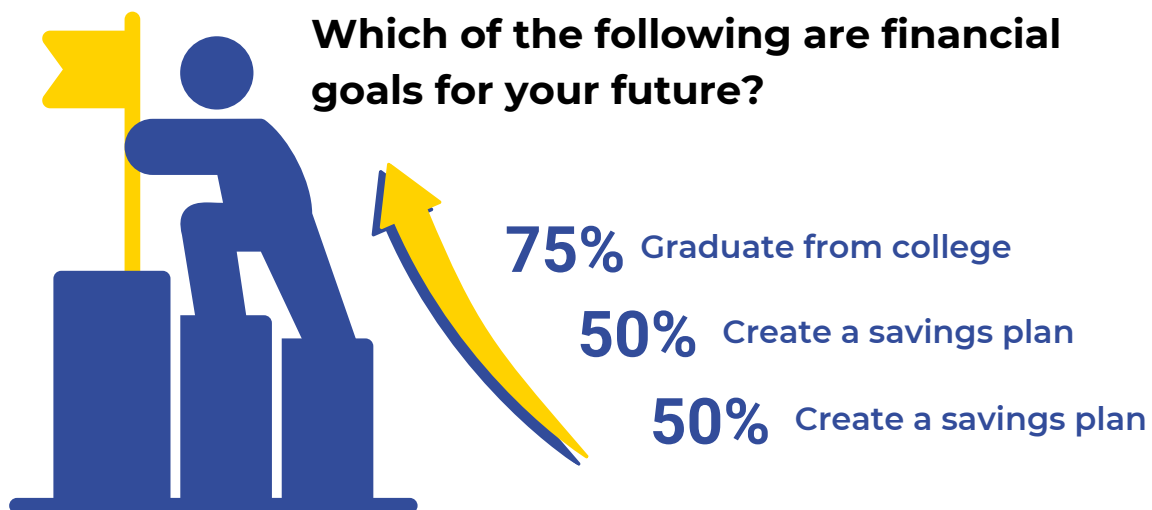
Ensuring that youth have access to the services they need is instrumental in promoting their overall well-being and can significantly reduce negative social outcomes and the likelihood of engaging in risky behaviors or criminal activities.

The City of Houston, like many major cities across our nation, has faced an unfortunate surge in violent crime since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. In response to this concerning trend, 2022 saw the launch of the One Safe Houston crime reduction initiative. This comprehensive effort combines research-based strategies aimed at enhancing public safety and mitigating the harmful impact of violent crime on our community. Recognizing the significant link between youth and crime, the initiative prioritized youth outreach and placed added emphasis on the importance of programs like Hire Houston Youth. Youth are twice as likely as adults to be both victims and perpetrators of violence, and young people of color are disproportionately affected, facing a higher likelihood of being arrested for violent offenses.

While youth employment serves as a vital tactic in reducing crime, it also provides a strategic entry point for imparting essential financial literacy skills. Summer jobs are indeed the starting point for building strong financial futures for young people. These opportunities not only equip them with essential job skills but also introduce them to early money management behaviors that can have a lasting impact. Recognizing the importance of real-world financial education, the Mayor's Office of Education and Youth Engagement actively collaborates with partners to ensure that safe and affordable youth banking accounts are readily available precisely when young individuals are arranging to receive their income.

A survey of Hire Houston Youth participants revealed that nearly half of the respondents were unbanked at the beginning of the program. This presented a unique and critical opportunity to deliver essential financial messages and resources precisely when these young individuals are forming habits that may influence their financial well-being throughout their lives.

With the support of the Cities for Financial Empowerment Fund and SERJobs, Hire Houston Youth is taking significant strides to incorporate financial literacy counseling into its programmatic functions. This initiative aims to empower young residents in underserved and unbanked communities, fostering economic mobility and social empowerment.



Houston's youth are undeniably diverse and multi-dimensional, which underscores the importance of the multifaceted approach adopted by the Mayor's Office of Education and Youth Engagement.

An able and ready workforce is critical to ensure a strong economic future for Houston. I am committed to providing access to internships and job opportunities for our young people who live in the city.

Since its inception, Hire Houston Youth has experienced significant growth and success. In 2016, it expanded its reach from 450 youth to 1,135. The following year, the program provided over 5,000 job opportunities, and its most substantial year, before the current, came in 2019, when it offered more than 11,500 jobs to young individuals. However, the unforeseen challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 disrupted summer youth employment programs nationwide, affecting our hard-earned gains. Nevertheless, the office persevered and placed over 1,800+ youth into virtual/digital, community health, and COVID-19 related jobs and internships, making Houston one of the few cities in the country to actively support a summer youth employment program during the pandemic. In 2021, with the economy rebounding from the effects of the coronavirus pandemic, Hire Houston Youth continued to make a substantial impact by offering over 9,500 job opportunities to our youth, reaffirming its commitment to their growth and development.

To ensure that the job opportunities provided reflect the current workforce trends and cater to the diverse needs of youth, the office has been diligently working to recruit and register employers across various key industries in Houston.



Houston is known for its strengths in energy, healthcare (including the Texas Medical Center, the world's largest medical complex), NASA and aerospace, and now the burgeoning field of information technology.

The Mayor's Office of Education and Youth Engagement recognizes that Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) jobs play a pivotal role in Houston's economic landscape. Houston is recognized for its diversity in STEM careers, and with the influx of STEM-based corporations, there's a growing demand for a well-trained STEM workforce.

To bolster the program's efforts, Houston secured a \$150,000 grant from the National League of Cities, one of only five cities nationally to receive this grant. This funding has been instrumental in expanding STEM career pathways, particularly for marginalized young individuals residing in underserved communities. By enhancing STEM opportunities, the program aims to provide youth with the skills and connections needed to thrive in STEM fields, ensuring that they are not just technologically connected but also connected to promising career opportunities.





One of the biggest expectations placed on high schoolers today is the expectation that we figure out what we want to do with the rest of our lives in just four years. We are expected to know if we want to become teachers, doctors, lawyers, or businessmen and women without having any opportunity to explore the reality of such futures. I first heard about Mayor Turner's Hire Houston Youth initiative as a possible solution to this problem through a teacher at my high school. Through it, I was able to discover ConocoPhillips' Accounting and Finance Co-op program, a program offering a comprehensive look into my personal interest in corporate finance. As a part of its inaugural class, I've been able to fully explore what a corporate career, specifically in the Oil and Gas industry, is like.

In the past seven weeks, my fellow Co-ops and I have had the chance to work with various branches of the finance organization within ConocoPhillips, from groups like audit and corporate staffs to commercial services. We have each been able to work on projects that contribute to the company and observe how different departments coordinate with each other. Personally, the opportunity to work alongside full-time employees has given me immeasurable insight into the office setting and what I want to do in the future. I've learned more about my work style and what roles best suit my specific skills and interests as well as what to develop in my time in college. This Co-op program, and others like it, are exactly what Houston youth need to better plan for their futures and contribute to society. I am beyond grateful to ConocoPhillips for developing it and to Mayor Turner's Hire Houston Youth program for helping me discover it in the first place!

Youth



19

Milestones



20,083

**Job and Internships Offered to
Houston Youth**



40,000

**Youth Served
Through Jobs
and Internships**



30,000

**Youth Completed Job
Readiness Training**

98%

**of Youth Participants
Would Recommend a
Friend to Work for
their Employer**



32

**Career Fairs
Conducted in
Under-resourced
Communities**

78%

**of Hire
Houston Youth
Jobs were
Career-Based**



3,315

**Resources Added
to Zip Code
Search Tool**

20



Early Childhood Education & Development

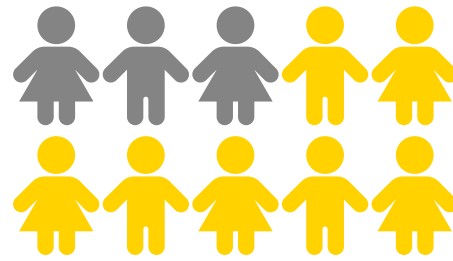
Early childhood education and development form the cornerstone of a child's future success. The experiences and education during these formative years profoundly influence a child's social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development. Pre-kindergarten education is especially crucial, equipping children with essential skills and significantly enhancing their chances of academic achievement and future success. Despite its importance, many children, particularly from low-income families, lack access to quality preschool education.

By promoting access, implementing early literacy programs, engaging parents, and collaborating with community centers and other educational organizations, the Office is actively building the foundation for a bright and successful future for every child in the city. Through these efforts, Houston is nurturing a generation of lifelong learners and empowering families for a better tomorrow.



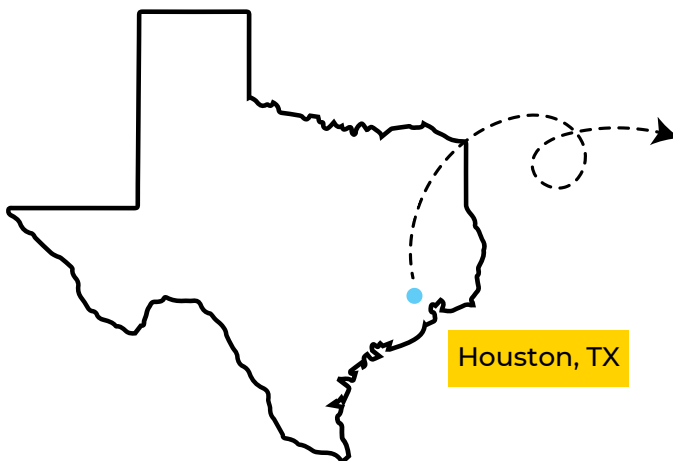
Don't let his size fool you; Earl is very smart and has a lot to contribute. Earl believes that children's voices should be heard and their thoughts valued—never underestimated. When it comes to being exposed to positive learning experiences, the earlier the better! Uriel the bear accompanies Earl on his mission to help people learn more about the area of Early Childhood Education and Development.

Childcare deserts, geographical areas where access to quality and affordable childcare services is severely limited or non-existent, pose significant challenges for families especially working parents, as they struggle to find reliable and safe care for their children.



70% of Children are Unable to Enroll in State-funded Preschools

There are not enough childcare spots available to meet the overwhelming demand. Even for those fortunate enough to live near a childcare provider, the cost of childcare remains a formidable obstacle.



County name: Harris County

Care Type: Preschool Center-based
Median yearly price in 2018 dollars: \$7,686
Median yearly price in 2023 dollars: \$9,046

County Economic Characteristics

Women's median earnings: \$27,836
Median family income: \$69,137
Percent of families in poverty: 13.4%

The expenses associated with quality childcare often place an enormous burden on low-income families. This predicament forces parents to make impossible decisions between providing for their families and ensuring their children receive the early education they need for proper development.

The consequences of childcare deserts are far-reaching, impacting parents' ability to pursue educational opportunities or simply maintain a healthy work-life balance. Reliable childcare enables parents, particularly mothers, to participate more fully in the workforce, contributing to economic growth and stability. Furthermore, the absence of accessible childcare options can hinder children's early development and educational readiness.

According to numerous studies, children who attend high-quality childcare programs tend to exhibit better cognitive, social, and emotional development than those who do not. They often perform better in school, have improved language skills, and develop strong social skills.

By leveraging its influence and collaborating with community stakeholders, the Mayor's Office of Education and Youth Engagement has spearheaded initiatives aimed at expanding access to quality childcare services. This has involved incentivizing the establishment of new childcare facilities in underserved communities and advocating for policy changes at the local level.

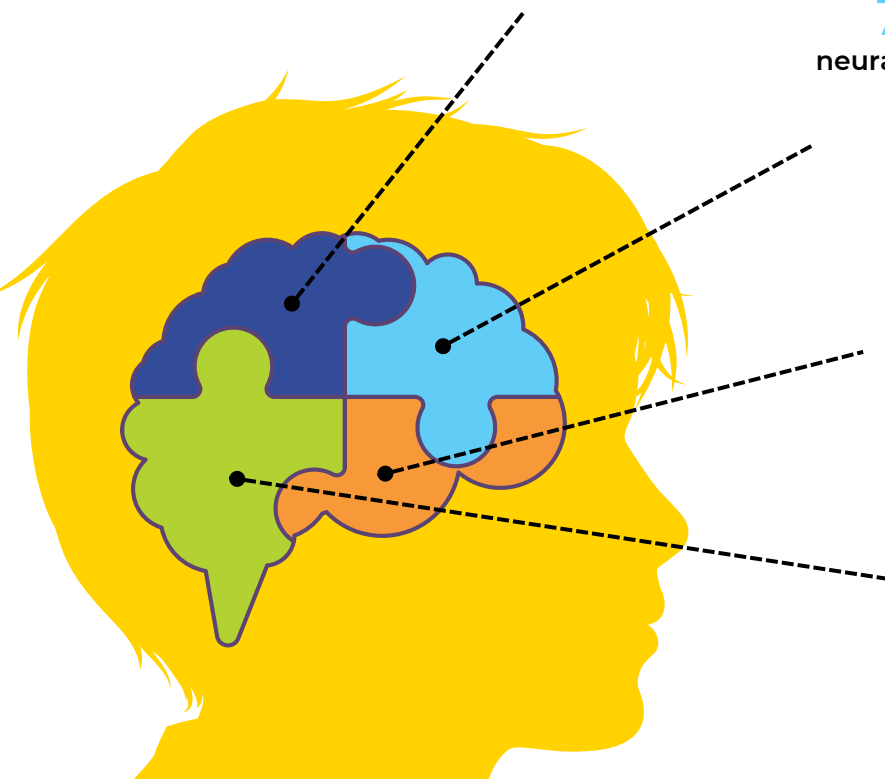


90% of a child's critical brain development happens before age 5.

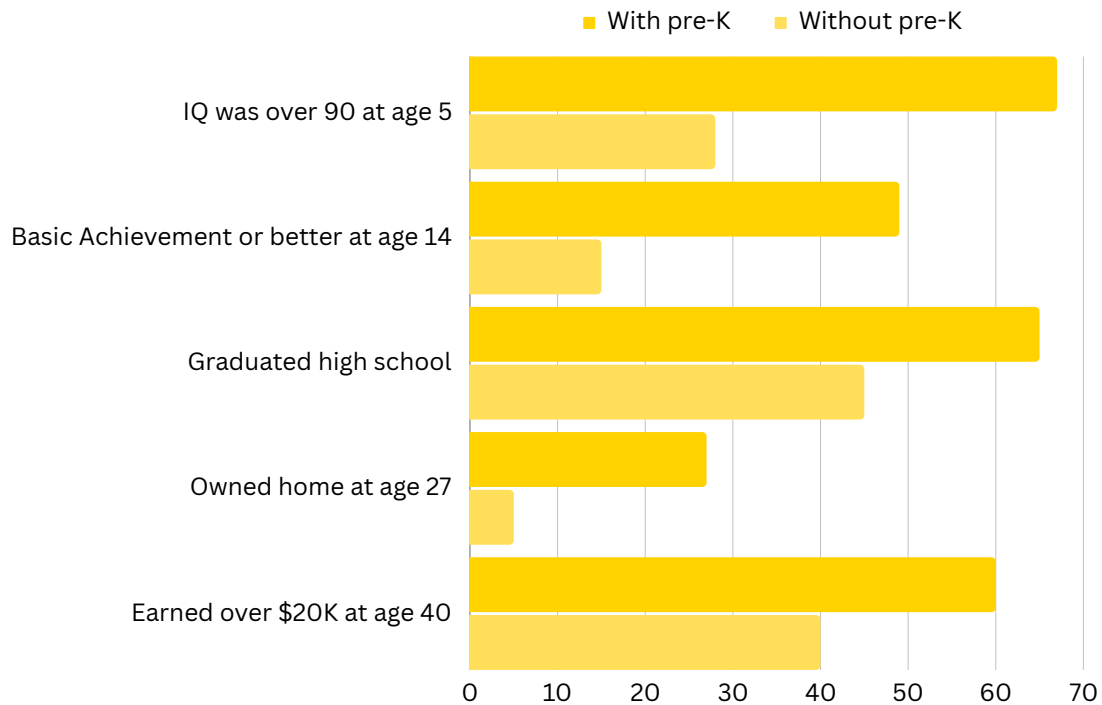
The brain forms as many as **700 to 1,000** neural connections per second before age 5.

Before the age of 5 children develop **cognitive, social, emotional, and language skills.**

Research has also shown that there are **short-and long-term** benefits for children who received an early childhood education compared to those who did not.



The Mayor's Office of Education and Youth Engagement has taken a commendable step in addressing the pressing issue of childcare deserts by forging a strategic partnership with the Bezos Academy. The Bezos Academy's commitment to early childhood education excellence and its track record of creating high-quality learning environments align seamlessly with the office's mission to enhance educational opportunities for all young people. Together, we are working to expand the reach of affordable, top-notch childcare facilities in areas that have historically suffered from a lack of access.



The partnership offers access to tuition-free, Montessori-inspired preschools in the cities most historically under-resourced communities. The preschools offer year-round programming, five days a week, for children ages 3-5 years old. Eligibility for the program is determined by family income.



Bezos Academy classrooms have a maximum of 20 students and a classroom ratio of at least 1 staff member for every 10 students. All teachers are licensed by the state and are trained in early childhood education. School staff also receive continuous training and development. The preschools offer multiple nutritious meals and healthy snacks for all students throughout the school day. The Bezos Academy also prioritizes diversity, equity, and inclusion in all aspects of their program model, welcoming all children and families — inclusive of every race, gender, identity, ethnicity, language, immigration status, or family background.

The collaborative effort between the Bezos Academy and the Mayor's Office of Education and Youth Engagement, which commenced in early 2022, has already yielded impressive results in addressing the childcare deserts plaguing Houston. Since the inception of this partnership, a total of four preschools have sprung to life. Bezos Academy Houston locations include the Denver Harbor Multi-Service Center, in Magnolia Park at the Community Family Center Building, in North Shore at the San Jacinto College North Campus, and in the New Hope Housing Reed Family Center located in South Side.

All four preschools have been strategically located in complete communities, as identified by the mayoral administration as historically underserved and in desperate need of accessible childcare services.



Milestones

\$100,000,000

Invested in Education



100%
of Enrolled
Students
Received Meals



4

Tuition-free Preschools
Established

10

Year Lease
Agreements
Established with
Bezos Academy and
Partners



14%
of Enrolled
Students in
Temporary
Housing/Foster
Care

100%

Annual Family
Income < 250%
Federal Poverty
Level



240

Children
Accessed Free
Quality Early
Education

27



Extra-Curricular Activities

Extra-curricular activities are fundamental for a holistic education, enhancing students' social, emotional, and intellectual development and offering them opportunities beyond classrooms to explore new interests, build confidence, and develop crucial life skills. These activities foster teamwork, leadership, goal-setting, creativity, and discipline, shaping well-rounded individuals.

Moreover, extra-curricular engagement fosters a sense of belonging, school pride, and community involvement.

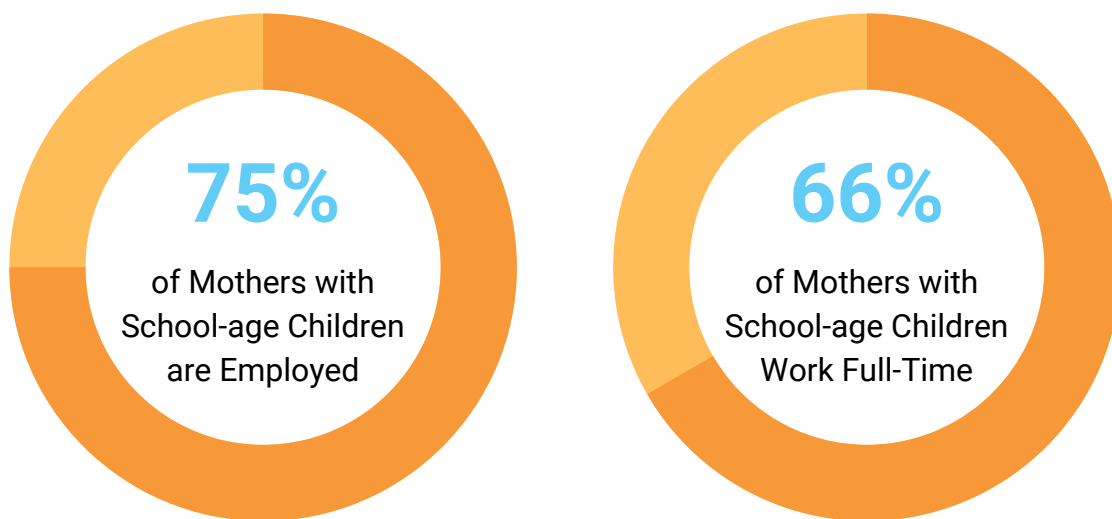
The Mayor's Office of Education and Youth Engagement recognizes the transformative power of extra-curricular activities and is dedicated to their promotion and support.



Erica gets excited every time the end-of-school bell rings. Don't get me wrong, she loves school! But after school, the fun continues with all of the other activities she loves doing. Sports, arts, music, cooking, debate—Erica loves trying it all! Not only are these things fun, but they're a great way to learn new skills and make new friends! Speaking of friends, Erica has a magic chef hat named Toqui.

In the United States, the need for out-of-school care for children is on the rise, and this demand has become a pressing concern for families, communities, and policymakers alike. Out-of-school programs, encompassing activities before and after school, during weekends, holidays, and throughout the summer, have evolved into essential components of children's academic and social development.

The dynamics of modern family life have undergone significant changes. With more parents juggling work commitments, there are fewer familiar adults available at home or nearby when children are dismissed from school. Public schools, traditionally operating for only 6 hours per day, 180 days per year, leave a considerable gap between parents' work schedules and their children's daily routines.



This gap can amount to nearly 1,000 hours per year, during which children are left with choices – they may engage in leisure activities and continue their learning journey, or they may, unfortunately, find themselves exposed to potentially harmful situations.

As the afternoon hours unfold, an alarming trend emerges – rates of juvenile crime triple, and many unsupervised youngsters begin to experiment with tobacco, alcohol, and drugs. Law enforcement statistics paint a stark picture, indicating a significant surge in risky behaviors and juvenile crimes specifically between 3:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. Startlingly, widely reported FBI statistics reveal that a staggering 47% of violent juvenile crimes occur on weekdays between 2:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m.

School-age children and youth spend a substantial 80 percent of their waking hours outside of the school environment. The question arises: What fills these hours, and how do they shape the future of our children, families, and communities? The answer lies in the transformative potential of high-quality afterschool programs. These programs serve as a sanctuary for positive youth development, offering a safe space where young individuals can foster social and emotional growth, enhance cognitive and academic development, reduce risky behaviors, and promote physical health. They represent a cornerstone of safety and support for children and youth, bridging the critical hours after the school bell rings.



1 in 5 young people in the U.S. are alone after the school day ends

Extracurricular activities and out-of-school programming, including after-school activities, summer programs, and student clubs, offer a gateway to success. They are catalysts for higher graduation rates, improved attendance, heightened engagement in school, and valuable exposure to future career possibilities.

Youth hailing from under-resourced communities often face a unique set of challenges that make them more susceptible to engaging in activities that can be detrimental not only to themselves but also to the neighborhoods they inhabit. Research consistently underscores the pivotal role of out-of-school time programs in reshaping these narratives.



Additional Benefits to Out-of-School Time

83%

Giving working
parents peace of
mind

76%

Engaging kids in
STEM learning

81%

Helping kids
build life skills

84%

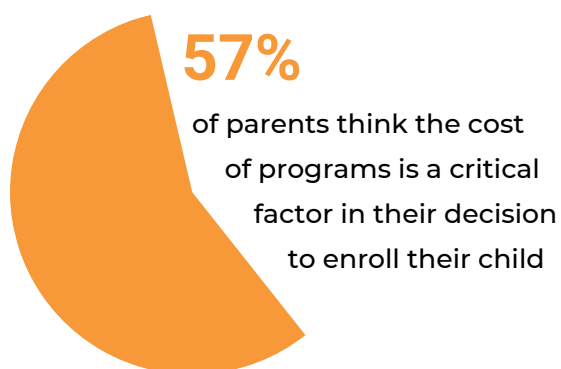
Providing kids
physical activity

In addition to the benefits mentioned, out-of-school programs kindle aspirations for higher education, igniting dreams of advanced degrees and career goals. Exposure to diverse learning experiences within these programs inspires youth to reach for academic and professional heights they might not have otherwise considered.

Perhaps most crucially, out-of-school programs are a lifeline for high school graduation. They provide critical support and motivation, helping students stay on track toward graduation. Additionally, these programs combat the "summer slide," where students often lose academic skills during extended breaks, by offering educational and enrichment activities during the summer, thus ensuring the retention of knowledge.

Despite the myriad benefits that out-of-school time programs offer to youth and their communities, there is a stark reality that cannot be ignored: the financial barriers that many families, particularly those in low-income households, face when it comes to affording after-school and out-of-school programs. The cost of providing after-school care typically falls within the range of \$2,000 to \$4,000 per child for a 12-month year, a substantial financial commitment that is often beyond the means of many low-income parents.

When we examine the barriers parents face when considering enrolling their children in afterschool programs, the cost of these programs consistently emerges as a top concern. This underscores the painful reality that the very families who could benefit most from these programs often find them financially out of reach.



Recognizing the undeniable value of out-of-school time services in fostering youth development and academic success, as well as acknowledging the formidable barriers to access, a collective effort emerged in Harris County. Community stakeholders initiated crucial conversations about families' access to out-of-school programs, leading to a transformative response in the summer of 2016. Houston Endowment commissioned a landscape study of out-of-school programs in Harris County, revealing critical shortages of such programming in several neighborhoods where there is a high need and demand. These underserved areas were identified as "out-of-school time deserts," signifying a troubling gap in access to essential educational and developmental opportunities.

In response to this pressing need, Houston Endowment launched "Out 2 Learn" in January 2018. Out 2 Learn stands as a collaborative initiative firmly dedicated to not only increasing access to out-of-school opportunities but also elevating the quality of these programs throughout Greater Houston. This vital effort is steered by Houston Endowment in partnership with the Mayor's Office of Education and Youth Engagement, Harris County Department of Education's CASE for Kids, and United Way of Greater Houston.



This mission is underpinned by a comprehensive, youth-centered approach that revolves around professional development, community investment, and raising awareness about the paramount significance of quality out-of-school services in nurturing youth development and academic achievement. The following pillars encapsulate the essence of Out 2 Learn's strategic vision:



1. Professional Development: At its core, Out 2 Learn is committed to honing the skills and capabilities of out-of-school leaders and professionals.



2. Community Investment: Out 2 Learn recognizes the power of partnerships and collaborations in bolstering the availability of high-quality out-of-school programs.



3. Community Awareness: Out 2 Learn raises awareness within the community regarding the pivotal role played by quality out-of-school time services. By disseminating knowledge and promoting understanding, the program endeavors to garner greater recognition of the positive impact these services have on youth development and academic achievement, ultimately fostering a culture that values and prioritizes out-of-school opportunities.



4. Youth Voice: Out 2 Learn places a profound emphasis on amplifying the perspectives and input of young people themselves. By actively engaging with and listening to youth, the program ensures that their voices are not only heard but also actively incorporated into the design and implementation of effective out-of-school programs. This approach empowers youth to shape their own experiences and promotes a sense of ownership in their educational journey.

In addition to these pillars, the Out 2 Learn program is built on three foundational strategies that form the bedrock of Out 2 Learn's comprehensive approach, catalyzing a positive transformation in the landscape of out-of-school time services in Greater Houston.

The three integral pillars that collectively form the programs essence are access, connections, and quality.

The Strategy



ACCESS

Addresses pronounced gaps in out-of-school services by making strategic investments into historically underserved communities.



CONNECTIONS

Makes information on out-of-school programs accessible to the community. Hosts quarterly meetings for out-of-school professionals to discuss quality and best practices,



QUALITY

Helps organizations deliver high-quality programming. All agencies associated with Out 2 Learn are encouraged to assess and improve the quality of their programs.



ACCESS

Out 2 Learn recognizes the disparities in out-of-school services across historically underserved communities where a high population of youth lacks access to quality programming. To bridge this gap, strategic investments are made in these underserved areas. Funded projects are not only a means to expand access but also serve as valuable contributors to Out 2 Learn's quality initiatives. By enhancing youth outcomes, these projects provide insights that benefit the broader out-of-school provider community. Through the coordinated allocation of funding streams, Out 2 Learn leverages available resources to systematically reach more families, empowering out-of-school programs to grow in scale and sustainability.



CONNECTIONS

The launch of the Out 2 Learn website served as a pivotal step in this endeavor, offering a comprehensive and searchable database for Houston parents and families to locate out-of-school programs in their localities. This user-friendly resource extends further by providing program information in over 150 languages via the 2-1-1 Texas/United Way HELPLINE. Additionally, Out 2 Learn facilitates quarterly meetings for out-of-school professionals, fostering discussions on quality, trends, and best practices while nurturing opportunities for out-of-school agencies to network and collaborate.



QUALITY

Out 2 Learn places a resolute emphasis on ensuring that organizations deliver high-quality out-of-school programming. All agencies associated with Out 2 Learn are encouraged to join the Out 2 Learn Quality Network, where program providers undergo training on utilizing the nationally-recognized Youth Program Quality Intervention tool. This tool serves as a means to assess and improve the quality of their programs, a process facilitated at no cost. Out 2 Learn's quality framework is characterized by a three-step process that encompasses real-time assessment and evaluation of program practices, the formulation of improvement plans based on assessment scores, and the subsequent implementation of these plans. These assessments occur annually at each site, gauging progress across four essential categories: ensuring a safe and sanitary environment for youth, providing supportive adult interactions that nurture individual growth, fostering positive peer interactions that promote belonging and leadership development, and enhancing youth engagement by encouraging ownership of learning, planning, and reflection.

In its unwavering commitment to expanding and enhancing out-of-school time programming, Out 2 Learn conducts the Building Opportunities for Out-of-School Time (BOOST) Request for Proposal. BOOST aims to identify and fund agencies that have the potential to make a positive impact on youth attendance, retention, and engagement within these programs.

Funded projects arising from the BOOST initiative are not standalone endeavors; they are seamlessly integrated into Out 2 Learn's comprehensive quality efforts. This integration is crucial in improving youth outcomes while concurrently allowing the broader out-of-school provider community to draw valuable insights from these projects. Through the coordination of multiple funding streams, Out 2 Learn leverages resources in a strategic manner, ensuring a systematic approach to serving more families and empowering out-of-school programs to scale their impact while promoting long-term sustainability.

The significance of Out 2 Learn's efforts was recently validated in February 2023 when the Mayor's Office of Education and Youth Engagement received recognition as an official ally of the Engage Every Student initiative by the U.S. Department of Education. This recognition marks a pivotal moment in the commitment to providing high-quality out-of-school time learning opportunities for every child who seeks to participate. By partnering with the Engage Every Student initiative, Out 2 Learn aligns itself with a bold and transformative call to action that seeks to foster connections and extend assistance to schools and communities.





Oscar, a 16-year-old with Autism, received a scholarship through the Barrier Buster Grant. He has made remarkable progress in his social skills. Previously, he would only observe others without engaging, but now, Oscar actively participates in class and has formed meaningful friendships. He openly shares his struggles with his classmates, which has been a life-changing experience for him, given his limited number of friends at school.

Michelle, a student in an art class, experienced significant improvement in engagement and progress when technology was introduced. With the addition of a computer tablet and an external monitor, Michelle actively participated in lessons, used the computer for reference images, and demonstrated enhanced drawing skills. Technology not only boosted her confidence but also positively influenced her artistic abilities.



In collaboration with Ernst and Young Houston (EY), Out 2 Learn addressed the digital divide by purchasing 395 brand-new Chromebooks. These Chromebooks were distributed through various O2L partners, including YMCA, The Alliance, MECA, HYPE Freedom Schools Inc, and Social Motion Inc. This initiative significantly contributed to bridging the technology gap within the community.

Milestones



142,000

**Youth Impacted through Out 2 Learn
Funding Barrier Buster Grants**



6,800

**Parents and
Caregivers
Impacted through
Out 2 Learn Funding
Barrier Buster
Grants**



8,750

**Adults and Children
Impacted Through
Resource Distributions**

1,500

**Youth Kept
Engaged During
COVID-19**



395

**New Chromebooks
Distributed to
Local Out-of-
School Programs**

30

**Projects Funded
Aimed at Removing
Barriers Such as
Technology and
Transportation**



14

**Summer Learning
Projects Funded
Across Greater
Houston**



Mental Health Resources

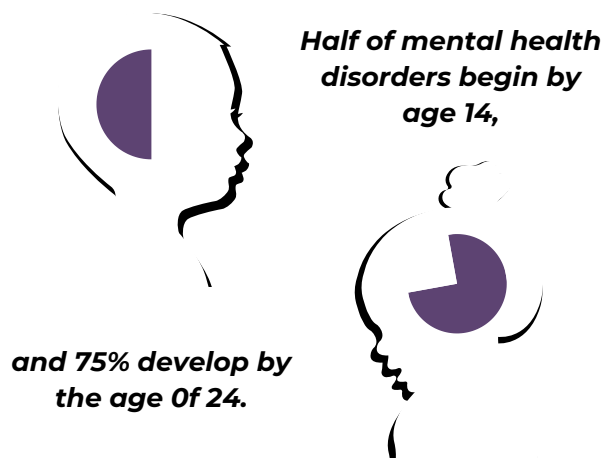
Mental health is a vital aspect of overall health. It influences emotional, psychological, and social well-being and is crucial for dealing with stress, maintaining relationships, productivity, and societal contribution at all life stages. Acknowledging its importance, the Office of Education and Youth Engagement engages in various initiatives to support mental health. These include conducting awareness campaigns and educational programs to reduce mental health stigma, fostering a more empathetic and supportive community.

Collaborating with local mental health organizations, the office enhances the range and quality of available mental health services, offering a holistic approach to support.



Mindy knows that life can be paved with stress and hardships. She understands that by being more in tune with her feelings, she can navigate those hardships. Practicing self-care and patience, being aware of the external environment and her thoughts and feelings, and staying up-to-date on all of the available mental health resources are all things that help her keep her mental health in good shape. Having the support of her bee friend, Polly, helps too!

Mental health refers to a person's emotional, psychological, and social well-being, encompassing their ability to manage stress, relate to others, make choices, and function effectively in daily life. Childhood and adolescence are critical stages of life for mental health. Exposure to adverse circumstances such as violence, parental or caregiver mental illness, bullying, and poverty can increase the likelihood of mental illness among young individuals.



These negative experiences can have profound and lasting effects on emotional and psychological development, potentially leading to a range of mental health challenges.

If left untreated and unaddressed, the long-term consequences of childhood adversity can be severe. Young individuals who endure such hardships without adequate support and intervention may face mental health issues into adulthood. Untreated mental health conditions can result in unnecessary disability, unemployment, substance abuse, homelessness, inappropriate incarceration, suicide, and poor quality of life.



37%

of students with a mental health condition age 14+ **drop out of school**

70%

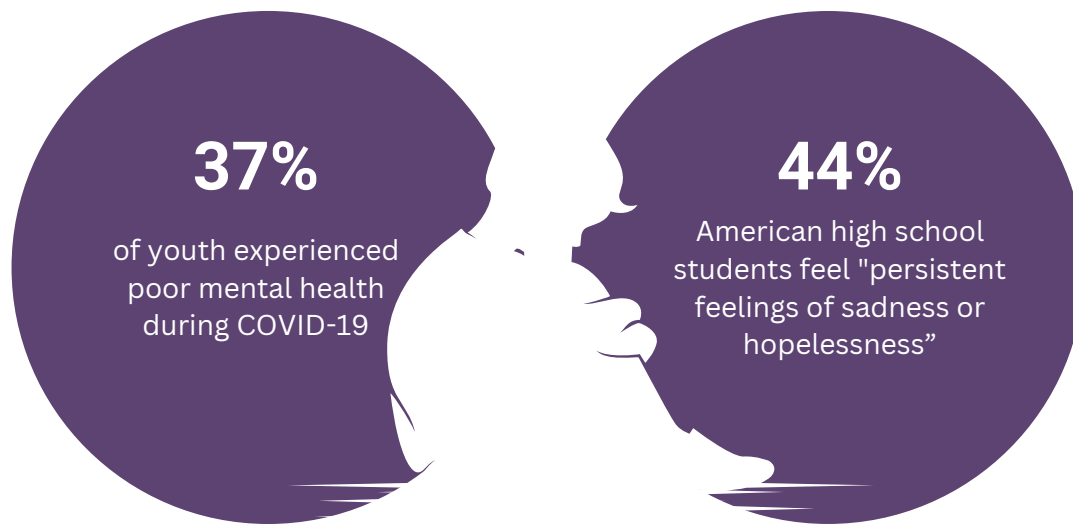
of youth in state and local **juvenile justice systems** have a mental illness



Mental health stands as one of the most pressing and yet often neglected challenges confronting children and youth in the United States today. The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated this crisis, intensifying feelings of isolation and uncertainty among young individuals.

In 2021, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and the Children's Hospital Association declared a national state of emergency in children's mental health.

According to a report from Mental Health America, youth in the United States are grappling with mental health issues at an alarming rate, with those aged 11 to 17 experiencing a disproportionate burden. This age group is more likely than any other to score for moderate to severe symptoms of anxiety and depression. Equally concerning, this age bracket also reports the highest rates of suicidal ideation. Compounding the issue, these challenges are exacerbated among minority youth and those in the LGBTQIA+ community. These groups often face unique stressors and discrimination that further strain their mental health.



Amid the overarching children and youth mental health crisis in the United States, Texas stands out for its particularly dire situation when it comes to mental health access. According to a national analysis, Texas ranks last among all 50 states, with its residents having the least access to essential mental health care compared to the rest of the nation.

Forbes reports a staggering statistic that over 73 percent of youth in Texas are experiencing mental hardships, yet they are not receiving the necessary mental health care. The analysis further reveals that Texas has the fourth-highest rate of children covered by private insurance plans that do not include coverage for mental or emotional care.

20%

of TX children experience
a **mental health concern**
each year

2 in 5

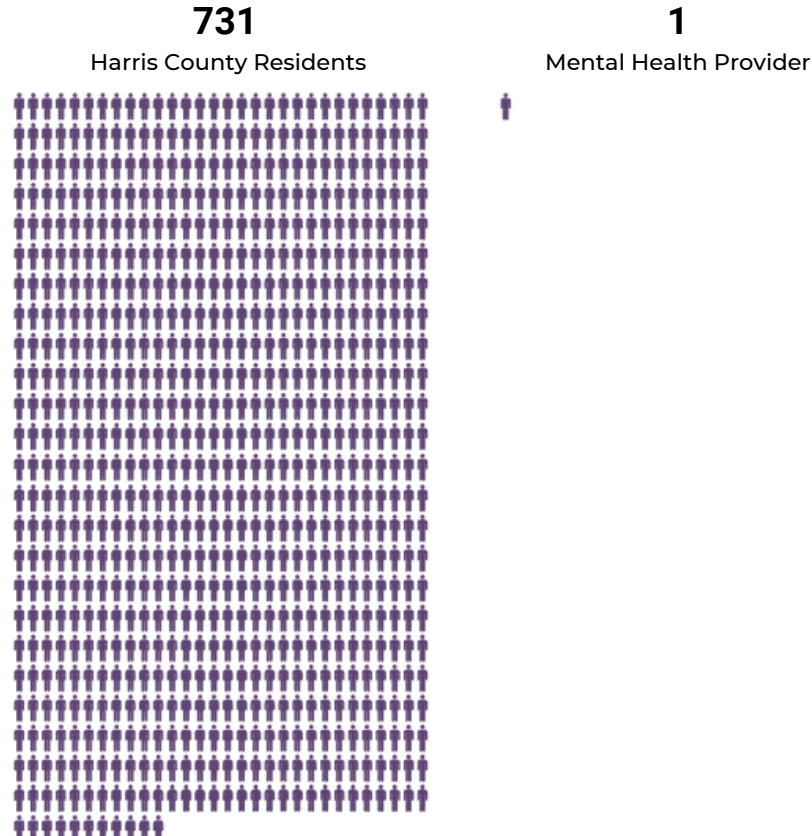
school-aged TX children
experience a **mental
health need** each year

2nd

Suicide is the 2nd-
leading **cause of death** in
adolescents

Houston is not insulated from the prevailing children and youth mental health crisis. The statistics convey a deeply concerning reality with nearly 310,000 children and youth within Harris County bearing the weight of various mental health disorders. Among the affected youth in Harris County, an alarming 65,000 children and young individuals face the burden of serious mental illnesses. These conditions encompass severe depression, anxiety disorders, bipolar disorders, and more.

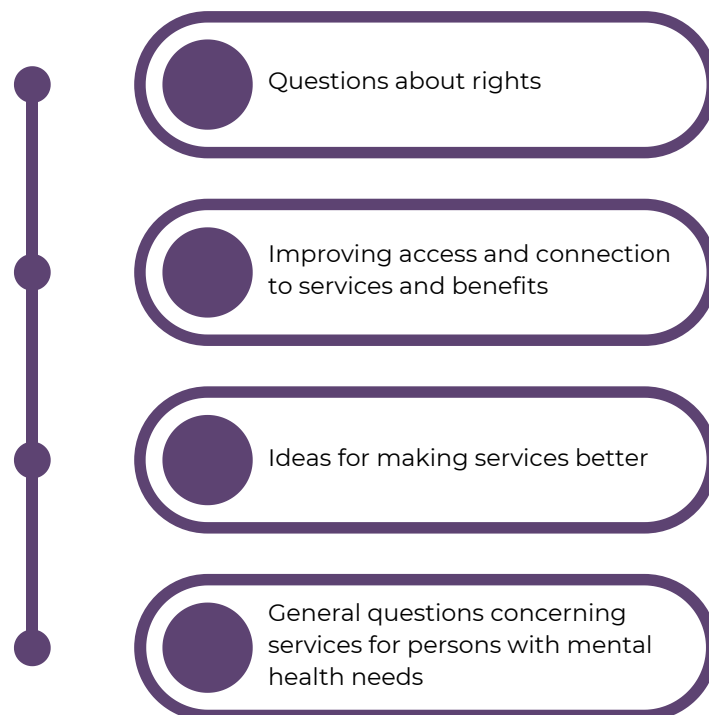
Compounding the challenges in Houston is the severe shortage of practicing child and adolescent psychiatrists. According to an Understanding Houston report, there is only one mental health provider for every 731 residents in Harris County, a stark contrast to the national average of one provider for every 350 residents.



The scarcity of mental health providers is indeed a formidable barrier, but it's not the sole challenge that youth and children face in accessing mental health support. Even in communities where providers exist, healthcare costs often loom as a significant obstacle. The financial burden of mental health care can be exorbitant and for many families it's a challenge to afford the necessary treatments, therapy sessions, or medications. The financial strain can also deter individuals and families from seeking help until their conditions have worsened.

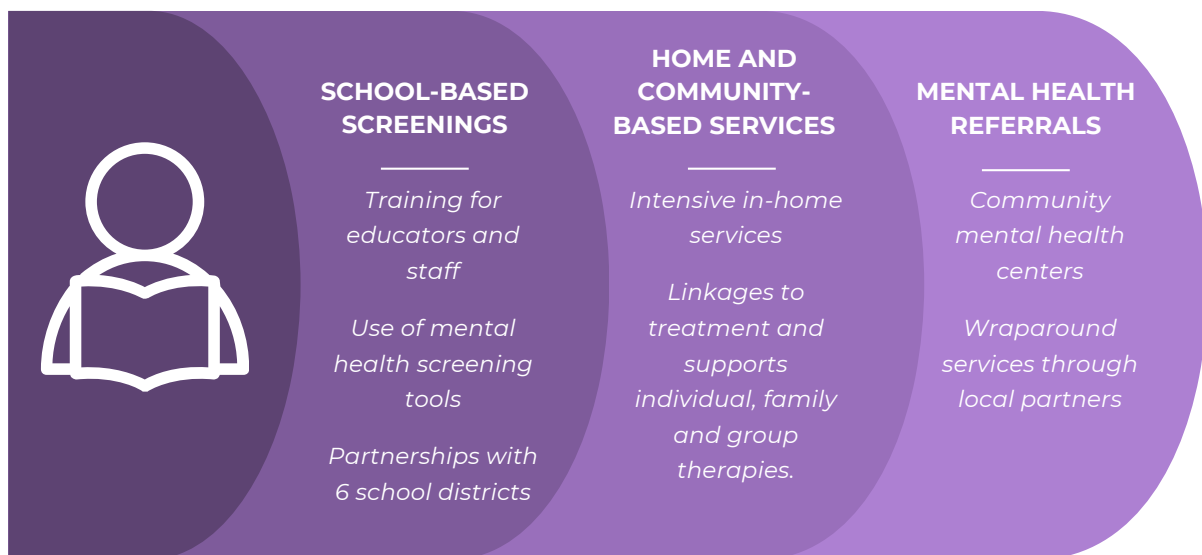
Beyond the financial barriers to mental health services, another formidable challenge lies in the pervasive stigma surrounding therapy and mental health. Deep-rooted cultural beliefs often contribute to the reluctance to seek help or openly discuss mental health issues. This stigma can lead to delayed intervention and youth and children suffering in silence, as individuals fear judgement or ostracization from their communities. This stigma increases the challenges faced by youth and children of color, as they may be even less likely to access mental health support, perpetuating a cycle of unaddressed mental health issues within these communities.

The Mayor's Office of Education and Youth Engagement is dedicated to breaking this cycle, addressing the pervasive stigmatization around mental health, and providing vital support services. The office aims to assist parents, guardians, and youth with challenges related to mental health needs for children/youth (up to 24 years old) with the following:



One crucial initiative through which the Mayor's Office of Education and Youth Engagement achieves this mission is the Be Well, Be Connected program. This program is instrumental in offering essential access to mental healthcare for Houston-area youth aged 9-17 who are grappling with serious and persistent mental illness.

By providing the crucial support, the program aims to create a more compassionate and resilient community where young individuals can receive the care and resources they need to lead healthy, fulfilling lives.



In addition to core objectives, the grant supporting the Be Well, Be Connected program extends its reach to several Houston-area public school districts and a charter district, where it provides critical first-level screening services.

Moreover, the program offers immediate tele-mental health crisis care directly at select school campuses. This approach not only ensures swift and timely intervention but also establishes a vital link between the children and their families with resources that extend beyond the immediate crisis. This connection is facilitated through the Texas State Child Mental Health Consortium.

Be Well, Be Connected seeks to significantly enhance the clinical infrastructure and capacity within the Greater Houston area, specifically to cater to children and youth dealing with mental health issues, especially those facing Severe Emotional Disorders.

To accomplish this critical mission, the program has outlined five strategic goals:

1. Screen and monitor youth at risk for developing a Severe Emotional Disorder.
2. Provide emergency mental health assessments through a tele-health platform that employs a culturally competent interview process alongside standardized screening tools.
3. Offer appropriate community referrals, guided by culturally competent and standardized assessments.
4. Deliver culturally competent evidence-based, intensive home and community-based services to youth presenting Severe Emotional Disorder and their families.
5. Align the enhanced clinical infrastructure with state and local policy initiatives to ensure the sustainability of enhanced clinical programming and efficient system coordination.

These strategic objectives serve as a comprehensive framework to not only increase access to mental health services but also to ensure that the quality of care and support is culturally sensitive and responsive to the unique needs of children and youth in the Greater Houston area.

The Be Well, Be Connected program is funded through a four-year grant from the federal agency Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and is delivered by Baylor College of Medicine. The office works closely with different Houstonian community organizations including:



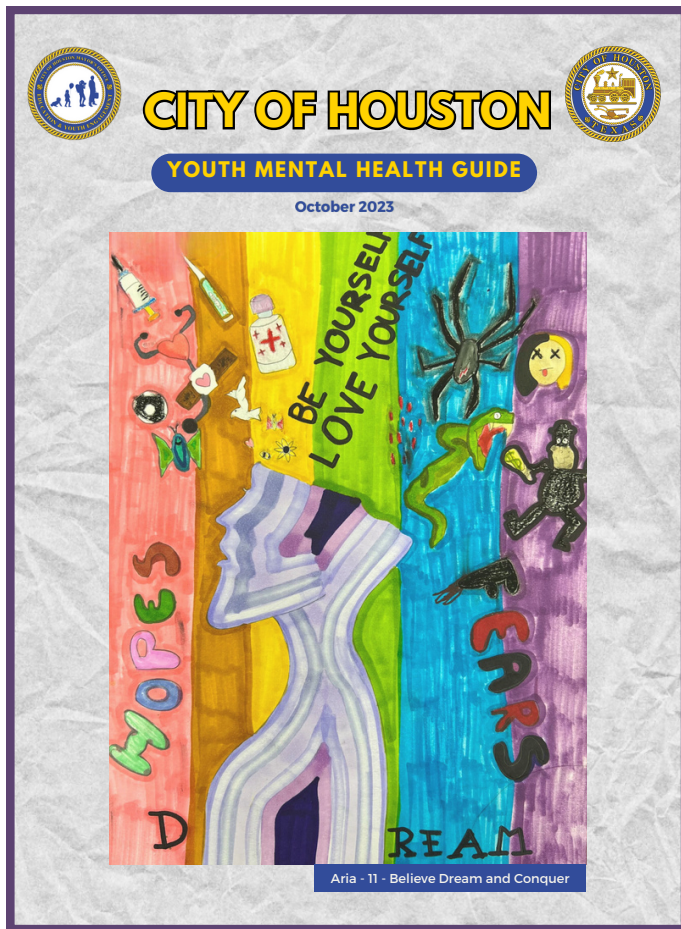
The Mayor's Office of Education and Youth Engagement is also committed to fortifying mental health resources for the community. Based on comprehensive community assessments, improving youth's access to mental health resources emerged as a pressing concern within the city.

Youth participants in these assessments indicated a low level of awareness about mental health care and faced difficulties in knowing how and to whom they should turn when dealing with mental health challenges. In response, the office developed a youth mental health guide tailored to individuals aged 16-24, providing them with information and resources to combat mental health stigma, connect with appropriate support systems, and identify allies in their mental health journey. The guide focuses on empowering youth to understand the steps necessary to care for their mental health, utilize the right language to seek support, and navigate the challenges and stigma associated with accessing mental health care. Recognizing the therapeutic potential of art in reducing anxiety and stress, while enhancing youth wellness, the guide



Oliva - 16 - Depression

incorporates art and illustrations, much like the art depicted to the left, from the Mental Health America Youth Art Showcase to make the content more engaging and accessible to young individuals and their families. Furthermore, the office collaborated closely with a working group of mental health professionals to ensure the guide's accuracy and relevance. This group comprises esteemed organizations like Mental Health America of Greater Houston, Texas Children's Hospital, National Alliance on Mental Illness of Greater Houston, the Harris Center, Houston OCD & Anxiety PLLC, and the Harris County Juvenile Probation Department, collectively working to strengthen youth mental health support and awareness in the Houston community.



One unique aspect of this guide is the integral role played by Houston's youth in its development. They provided invaluable insights into what topics should be covered and how the information should be conveyed, ensuring the guide is accessible and relatable. To promote this vital resource and raise awareness about youth mental health, the Office of Education and Youth Engagement initiated a youth-led mental health communication campaign. This campaign featured a series of social media posts created in collaboration with the City of Houston Youth Ambassadors, ensuring that the message resonates with young people.

Furthermore, the Mayor's Office of Education and Youth Engagement conducted intergenerational workshops which served as a critical platform for both youth and service providers to emphasize the vital need for adults to be well-informed and trained in matters concerning youth mental health. It was determined that equipping adults with the knowledge and skills to understand and support youth facing mental health challenges, along with ensuring they are aware of available resources, is paramount to fostering a healthier community.

The Mayor's Office of Education and Youth Engagement took proactive measures by identifying and collaborating with mental health providers to host a series of essential training sessions. These sessions include: Youth Mental Health First Aid, Adverse Childhood Experiences and Supporting Children from Traumatic Backgrounds, Identifying Child Abuse and Maltreatment, Supporting Children of Incarcerated Parents, and Mindfulness and Self-Care.

The Mayor's Office of Education and Youth Engagement hopes to increase access to these training opportunities, thereby empowering and educating service providers, educators, community members, and parents who work with youth. In 2022, the office conducted a total of 21 youth mental health trainings, with approximately 700 participants benefiting from these valuable resources. Among these dedicated individuals were nurses, Parks and Recreation staff, Houston Public Library personnel, teachers, school administrators, after-school program staff (e.g. YMCA), immigration advocates, and faith-based/church staff and pastors. By ensuring that these community members are equipped to understand and address the mental health needs of youth, the Mayor's Office of Education and Youth Engagement endeavors to create a more supportive and resilient environment for Houston's younger generation.





I found this training insightful. I work with children between the ages of 0-17, some of whom have suffered immense trauma. This training allowed me to learn and understand the mechanics of trauma in the body, and was also provided with strategies, references, and diagrams that were very useful.

Participant



Very dynamic and applicable information. Should be required training to all working with children and youth.

Participant



I felt comforted because I was able to relate to what the youth were sharing about their struggles, and it made me feel less alone.

Youth

Milestones



114,000

Students Potentially Impacted
by Mental Health Resources



350

Mental Health
Counselors Working in

174

Schools Received Emotional
Backpack Training



932

At-risk Youths
Received Four Free
Clinical Care Visits

2,331

Youth Served
Through Free Tele-
health Sessions



117

Participants
Connected to
General Mental
Health Resources

75

Behavioral Health
Professionals
Trained in 3
Specialized
Activities



35

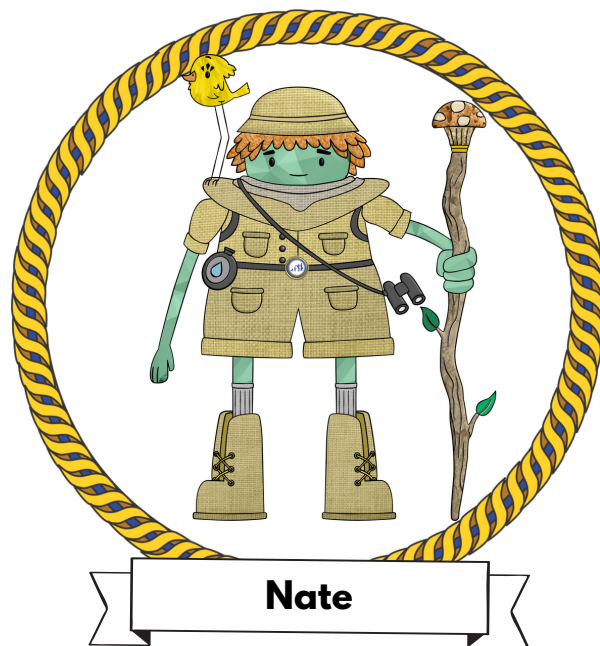
Individuals
Received Individual,
Family, and Group
Therapy



Nature & Outdoor Connection

Nature and outdoor education play a pivotal role in shaping well-rounded individuals and nurturing environmental awareness. It offers invaluable lessons in environmental stewardship, problem-solving, and teamwork, and it instills a sense of wonder, curiosity, and respect for the natural world.

Recognizing this, the Mayor's Office of Education and Youth Engagement is dedicated to promoting and supporting nature and outdoor education, ensuring that the community's youth are connected with the natural world.



Nate is an explorer. As you can probably tell, he loves long walks in the park, spending time outdoors, and staying active. Houston has so many wonderful nature spots and outdoor areas to explore, some of which you might not know about! Nate has explored most of them, and, with the help of his little bird friend, Peck, he'll be happy to be your guide in anything related to nature and outdoor connection.

In an era marked by growing disconnection from the natural world, our children are facing a crisis that imperils their well-being, health, and the future vitality of our urban natural resources. The City of Houston echoes a nationwide concern about the troubling disparities in children's access to nature and the great outdoors across the United States.



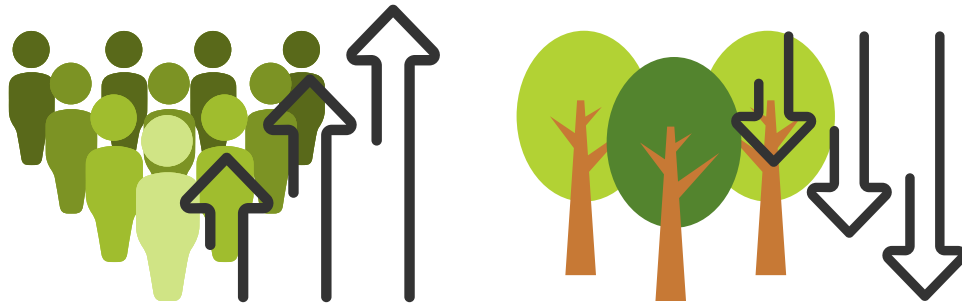
Americans Living in Urban Areas
Without a Park Within a 10-Minute
Walk of their Residence

Nationally, there is a stark decline in youth spending time outdoors and a waning interest in the natural environment. Cities and states across the country are taking commendable steps to bridge the gap and ensure that our youth have equitable and abundant resources to connect with nature. In 2023, this commitment to change was vividly reflected in both federal and state legislative sessions with over 200 bills focused on outdoor recreation, education, access, and equity introduced across 40 U.S. states.

Countless research studies underscore the profound benefits of outdoor exposure for children's physical and mental development, as well as the broader advantages it bestows upon communities that safeguard access to green spaces. Yet, when disparities in nature access persist, shaped by income disparities and zip codes, marginalized communities are unjustly deprived of these invaluable benefits.

Recent data paints a stark picture of children's indoor-centric lives, with school recess often accounting for a staggering 70% of their weekday physical activity, leaving limited time for meaningful interactions with the natural world. Additionally, surveys reveal a glaring obstacle for low-income families: the very parks designed to offer respite are often neglected and marred by concerns of crime and violence.

Over the years, it has become apparent that lower-income neighborhoods and communities of color often contend with fewer parks and recreational resources in comparison to their more affluent counterparts. This persistent lack of equitable access not only limits opportunities for physical activity but also hampers social interaction and overall quality of life for residents in these underserved communities.



Harris County to Grow by 2.3 million in the next 40 years, but tree coverage is to decrease up to 4.9% in the next ten years.

The dwindling number of trees in our urban landscapes is one of the far-reaching consequences that pose a significant challenge as well. As the canopy of trees diminishes, so too does their invaluable role in keeping neighborhoods shaded and cool. Trees act as nature's air conditioners, offering respite from scorching temperatures, particularly crucial in regions like Houston that frequently contend with extreme heat. However, an unsettling reality persists in Houston, where a notable 14% discrepancy in tree canopy cover exists between the wealthiest and most impoverished neighborhoods. This inequity exacerbates the challenges faced by underserved communities, compounding the adverse effects of rising temperatures and climate uncertainty. Moreover, the benefits of trees extend well beyond temperature regulation. They play a pivotal role in mitigating extreme weather events, absorbing excess rainwater, and reducing the risk of flooding.



Additionally, the Public Land Trust's annual ParkScore ranking, positioning Houston at 71st out of 100 other large cities, underscores the importance of enhancing our park systems. The analysis reveals that while 61% of Houstonians live within a 10-minute walk of a park, only 12% of the city's land is allocated for parks and recreation, both figures falling below the national median.



Currently, Houston falls below the national average when it comes to park investment, spending approximately \$12 less per person over a three-year period compared to the national average.

Research consistently highlights the transformative power of regular outdoor play and learning, emphasizing its positive impact on children's physical and mental health, social-emotional skills, and academic achievements. Beyond these immediate benefits, it also instills a sense of environmental stewardship, nurturing a generation that will be better equipped to address the pressing challenges of climate change and environmental sustainability.

Benefits of Children Playing Outside



Build Physically Healthier Children

Playing in the sun builds vitamin D in the body, which means stronger bones and less likelihood of chronic diseases.



Contribute to Cognitive and Social/Emotional Development

Fresh air and play reduce stress levels and cause children to be more inventive, exploring and learning about the world.



Improve Sensory Skills

An optometry and vision science study showed children who play outside regularly have better distance vision than children who are always indoors.



Increase Attention Spans

Children who play outdoors regularly are more curious, self-directed, and likely to stay with a task longer.



Grow in Happiness and Immunity

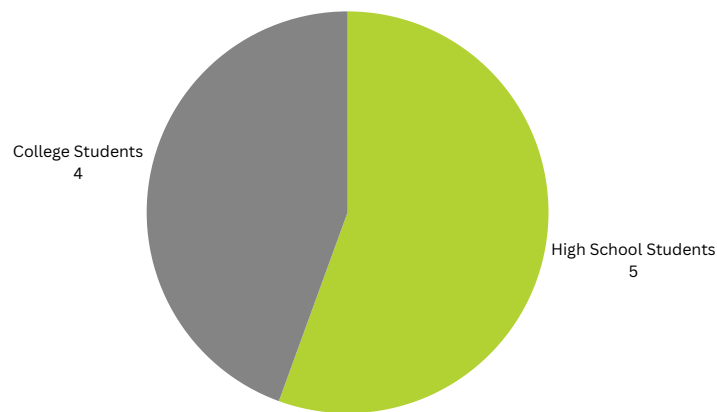
Outdoor light stimulates the pineal gland. This part of the brain is vital to keeping the immune system strong and making people feel happier.

Recognizing the profound benefits of outdoor time, coupled with the stark reality of limited accessibility for many, particularly low-income children, the Mayor's Office of Education and Youth Engagement understands its pivotal role in championing the well-being of its youngest residents and expanding their access to the wonders of nature. As the fourth most populous city in the nation, Houston embraces its responsibility to lead the way in fostering a healthier, more connected, and nature-rich environment for its children.

In 2018, Houston embarked on an impactful journey as one of the 18 U.S. cities selected by the National League of Cities and the Children & Nature Network to join the transformative Cities Connecting Children to Nature initiative. This collaborative effort has been instrumental in guiding the city towards the shared goal of enhancing equitable access to nature, ultimately elevating the overall well-being of its children.

To demonstrate this unwavering commitment, the office proudly introduced the Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights. The Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights serves as a powerful testament to Houston's dedication to its children, outlining a set of fundamental rights that every young Houstonian deserves, including the right to clean air, green spaces, and the joyous exploration of the natural world.

In the summer of 2022, an intergenerational committee, comprising local youth and community leaders, was thoughtfully convened to engage in a crucial dialogue surrounding the priority issue at hand and to collaboratively determine the fundamental rights that would be enshrined within the Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights. This diverse and dynamic committee brought together a wide array of voices and experiences, including local government leaders, dedicated nonprofit professionals, passionate educators, insightful researchers, and, most importantly, the very youth whose lives would be profoundly impacted by the decisions made.



Out of the 34 esteemed committee members who played a pivotal role in shaping the Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights, an impressive 11 were vibrant high school students ranging from ages 14 to 18, hailing from various corners of the Greater Houston Area. Their youthful energy, fresh perspectives, and unwavering commitment to their community infused the Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights with a sense of urgency and relevance that resonates deeply with the youth it aims to empower.

Furthermore, the Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights development was guided and propelled by the leadership of nine exceptional young individuals employed by the City of Houston. Among them, four were dedicated current undergraduate or graduate students, aged 18 to 24, bringing a wealth of academic insight and enthusiasm to the table. Additionally, five high school students, ages 14 to 18, hailing from the Greater Houston Area. Together, this intergenerational cohort of committee members ensured that the Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights truly represents the collective vision of Houston's youth and community leaders.

The intergenerational committee worked diligently to identify and craft a comprehensive set of 12 fundamental rights, unique to Houston. The rights include:

Safe Routes

Children have the right to safe and accessible routes to outdoor spaces in their communities.

Access to Shade

Children have the right to adequate shade in the outdoors.

School Grounds as Green Spaces

Children have the right to connect with nature on their school grounds.

Equitable Park Investments

Children have the right to equitably funded public parks regardless of zip code.

Youth Participation and Engagement

Children have the right to discover leadership opportunities to be stewards of nature.

Accessible for All Abilities

Children have the right to be accommodated with accessible outdoor environments.

Climate Resilience

Children have the right to green spaces that mitigate the impact of climate change.

Mental Health and Wellness

Children have the right to experience the mental health and wellness benefits of nature.

Native Plants and Wildlife

Children have the right to experience native wildlife and plants in their local park and green spaces.

Affordability

Children have the right to free or low-cost outdoor programming.

Healthy Air Quality

Children have the right to breathe fresh and clean air.

Safety Awareness

Children have the right to learn how to be safe in the outdoors.

On April 18, 2023, the City of Houston made history by becoming not only the fifth but also the largest city in the United States to embrace a Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights. This momentous occasion was marked by a mayoral proclamation ahead of Houston's largest Earth Day celebration.



Through this initiative, Houston is not only creating a more equitable and inclusive city but also nurturing a generation that will be better equipped to address the pressing challenges of the future, ensuring that our children grow up with a profound connection to nature and the knowledge that the great outdoors is their birthright.





“

I hope the Houston COBOR can lead to more youth engagement and prompt youth to get more active in our society. When youth see changes happening, they are more likely to get involved themselves.

Youth Committee Member

“

As the parent of a toddler, it is the type of greenspace that helps us nurture respect and wonder in our son's relationship with the natural world, while also enhancing our physical and emotional well-being through the connection to nature.

Adult Committee Member



“

My favorite part of being on the committee was being able to represent my community. The most impactful COBOR right to me is 'Children have the right to experience the mental health and holistic wellness benefits of engaging with nature' because mental health is an important and serious issue.

Youth Committee Member



Milestones



5th

and Largest City in the United States to
Adopt a Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights



1.4 mil

Trees Planted by the City
of Houston out of the

4.6 mil

Goal by 2030



7,423

Acres of Natural Habitat
Included in Ordinance to
be Protected

296

Community Members
Pledged their
Support for the Bill



34

Committee
Members Convened
to Assess
Children's Access
to Nature

20

Miles of High-
Comfort Bike
Lanes were Built
in 2020



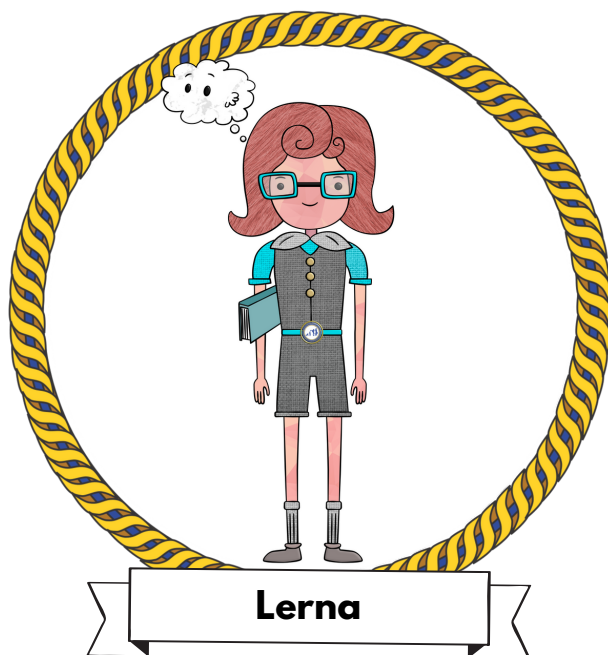
16

Young People
Engaged in the
Youth Climate
Ambassador
Program



School & Community Engagement

Education is the bedrock of society, and the healthy collaboration between schools and their communities is vital for maintaining a thriving educational ecosystem. School and Community Engagement ensures that every student, teacher, and school in Houston receives the support they need to excel. The Mayor's Office of Education and Youth Engagement acts as a vital link, connecting schools with the diverse resources available in the vibrant Houston community.



You could say that Lerna is academically inclined. She loves getting lost in a good book, and she is always learning something new. She knows all the ins and outs of school life, and she loves sharing her knowledge and being involved with the community. Oh, and she loves doing homework together with her thought bubble friend, Bloop.

In an interconnected and dynamic world, meaningful community engagement holds immense value in the realm of education and youth empowerment. The youth, comprising a significant portion of Houston's diverse population, require robust support systems to guide them toward successful paths.

Education serves as the foundation of our society, and it is a shared responsibility to ensure that every student in Houston, all 1.3 million of them, has access to the necessary resources to achieve their highest potential. The Mayor's Office of Education and Youth Engagement plays a pivotal role as a bridge between schools and the broader community, facilitating access to the wealth of resources available within the vibrant and diverse Houston region.

This office is dedicated to supporting the EC-12 education system at all levels, from district administrators to individual classrooms, by amplifying existing community-school initiatives and connecting schools with a vast network of public and private partners committed to supporting education.

The Mayor's Office of Education and Youth Engagement is steadfast in its commitment to expanding outreach and support for marginalized children and youth. By providing essential knowledge and resources, the office aims to empower young individuals personally and professionally.

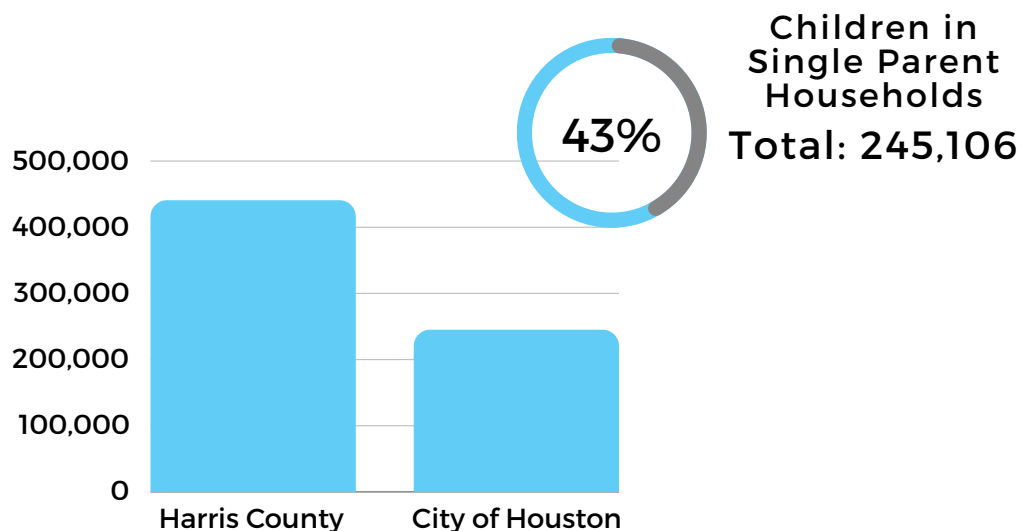
As part of the strategy to address community needs, the office conducts surveys to better understand the issues facing the community. The office then designs programs tailored to meet those needs. After identifying the sizable population of Houston-area elementary school students living in poverty, the office teamed up with Shell to host the annual Mayor's Back to School Fest.





The primary objective of this event is to provide support to economically disadvantaged students and their families as they prepare to return to school. At the event, backpacks filled with school supplies are distributed, along with on-site health screenings, including dental screenings and sealants, vision screenings, and routine immunizations. The event also serves as a vital connection point between families and a wide range of health and social services offered by community agencies.

The Mayor's Family Fun Day in the Park also holds significant relevance for low-income children, particularly those living in single-parent households. This annual event conducted by the Mayor's Office of Education and Youth Engagement offer a valuable opportunity for affordable and accessible recreation and community engagement.



The annual event is hosted with the purpose of strengthening community bonds and promoting the well-being of Houston's families. There are inflatable games, a rock wall to climb, train rides for the little kids, face painting, and a tent where senior attendees can enjoy the festivities comfortably.

One of the more heartwarming aspects of this event is the abundance of food, all provided free of charge. Moreover, accessibility is a top priority, with Metro offering complimentary shuttle buses from two convenient off-site parking locations. Attendees can also rest assured that parking at the event itself is entirely free, eliminating any barriers to participation. This event serves as a wonderful option for low-income families who are seeking an enriching and cost-free way to spend



quality time with their children, reinforcing the commitment to inclusivity and community support. When the unexpected challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the ability to gather in large groups, the annual event took on a new purpose. Recognizing the pressing needs of the community during this crisis, the office shifted its focus to distributing essential resources to support families.

An additional resource that was identified as scarce before and exacerbated during COVID-19 was access to technology. In response, the Mayor's Office of Education and Youth Engagement became actively involved in addressing the digital divide, recognizing its profound impact on youth and the broader community.

The disparity in access to technology and the internet leaves many young individuals from underserved backgrounds at a distinct disadvantage. This divide limits their access to essential educational resources, hinders their ability to engage in online learning, and curtails opportunities for skill development in an increasingly digital world.

34%



of K-12 public school students in Texas do not have adequate access to the internet at home

25%



of Texas' kids do not have an adequate device at home like a laptop or a computer

To address this divide, in 2021, the office forged a valuable partnership with Coca-Cola Southwest Beverages. Coca-Cola Southwest Beverages' generously contributed a remarkable pledge of \$1 million in laptops, which will be thoughtfully distributed to students across multiple Texas communities. This collaboration exemplifies the power of public-private partnerships in creating equitable access to educational resources for underserved youth.

The Mayor's Office of Education and Youth Engagement acknowledges the significant contribution private industries can make towards enriching local schools and students. As such, the office is committed to forging strong partnerships between businesses and educational institutions, utilizing the resources and knowledge of private enterprises to bolster educational programs throughout Houston.





The Mayor's Back to School Festival is a tradition that marks the start of the school year and more importantly supports thousands of students and their families. Preparing Houston students for the future is the responsibility of our community and Shell is honored to be part of this effort to keep the next generation moving forward.

Private Partner



I, like so many in Acres Homes, have been missing the fun and fellowship at our annual Family Day at Sylvester Turner Park. We can't gather in large groups just yet so the next best thing is to provide some of the same food we have at Family Day plus a whole lot more.

City of Houston Mayor



The Houston Independent School District has worked collaboratively with the Mayor's Office of Education and Youth Engagement to ensure youth are connected to the resources they need. We share a common goal, a goal of wanting to see Houston's youth and young adults reach their full potential.

Former HISD Representative

Milestones



25,000

Backpacks with School Supplies
Distributed to Houston Children and Youth



26

Local High Schools Awarded
New Dell Laptops Impacting

120+

Diverse Seniors

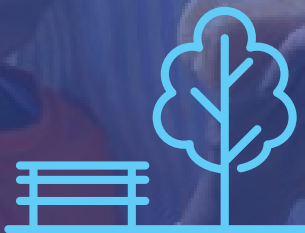


700

Local Businesses and
Corporations Engaged

280

Houston Independent
School District
Campuses Engaged



15

Mayor's Family
Fun Day in the
Park's Hosted

20

Independent
School Districts
Engaged



12

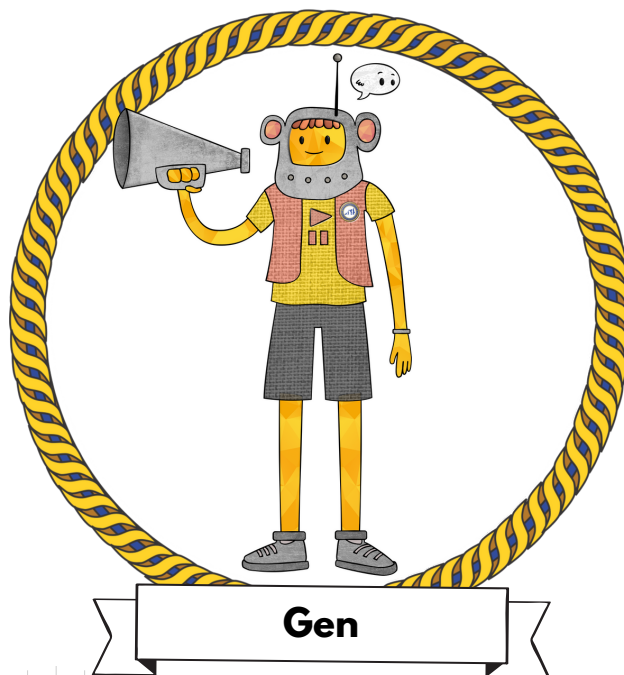
Universities and
Community Colleges
Engaged



Youth Engagement

The City of Houston is committed to meaningful youth participation. By empowering young voices and nurturing their potential, we are building a city that is safe, equitable, just, and inclusive, ensuring that our future is led by the vision and creativity of our youth. By empowering young voices, we aim to create a city where every child's worth is acknowledged, regardless of their background or circumstances.

Youth engagement is not just about involving young people in conversations; it's about recognizing their inherent worth and ensuring their rights are integrated into every aspect of our community.



Gen loves to be in the know of all the latest news and trends and share them with the community; it's what he does best! He's a great communicator, so he knows how to draw the crowd in with his charisma (and megaphone). And Voxy the speech bubble is always there to help spread the word as well!

Youth engagement is a crucial aspect of addressing the unique challenges that young people face in a diverse city like Houston. In a city with concerns ranging from school safety to access to essential resources and pressing issues like the quality of education and climate change, it's imperative to recognize that the youth in Houston not only deserve to have their voices heard but also practical means to effect change in their communities. With children aged 0-18 making up a significant 25% of Houston's population, they represent some of the most vulnerable residents and, in many ways, reflect both the vitality and the inefficiencies within the city's systems.

The findings from a Community Assessment conducted by the Mayors Office of Education and Youth Engagement revealed that Houston's youth participation rates rank low on various scales.

Youth Respondents Rated...



Community Decision-Making



Child/Youth Advocacy



Child Participation Opportunities

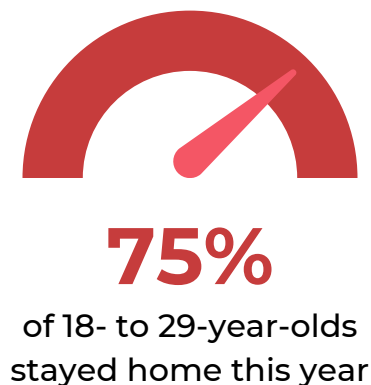


Awareness of Children's Rights

These ratings underscore the need to improve youth engagement efforts in the city. Engaging young people has numerous benefits, extending beyond just empowering them.

It helps them develop vital life skills such as leadership and critical thinking, boosts their self-esteem, and contributes to their professional growth. Moreover, it fosters early civic engagement, setting the stage for responsible citizenship. On a systemic level, involving children in decision-making processes and listening to their perspectives can drive positive, enduring changes across the city. Their insights can uncover gaps and inequities that hinder the development of certain communities.

On a national scale, the Harvard Institute of Politics highlights a troubling trend: youth engagement levels in the United States are alarmingly low. Fewer than half of young Americans aged 18-24 vote in local, state, and national elections, and fewer than 10% meet the standard of "informed engagement." Disparities in opportunities for civic learning and engagement further exacerbate the issue, with white, wealthy students disproportionately outperforming Hispanic or Black students from low-income backgrounds.



In essence, youth engagement is not just a matter of empowering the next generation; it's essential for building a more equitable and inclusive society, both at the local level in Houston and on a national scale. Targeting children between the ages of 13-18 and allowing them the medium to participate and learn about the processes of local government is crucial to increasing the rates of civic engagement in youth in Houston.

The Mayor's Office of Education and Youth Engagement is making strides to streamline this process by creating spaces in which youth can feel comfortable and take an active role in building their communities. The office is able to effectively lead this process thanks to its strong connections with educators and beneficial partnerships with several youth-centered programs across greater Houston.

The goal is to serve as a catalyst for fostering youth engagement throughout the city to ensure the rights of every child are fully recognized and integrated into the fabric of our government policies, budgets, programs, and services.

The Office Supports and Facilitates Children's Rights to:



Have a Say in All Matters
Affecting Them and Be
Taken Seriously



Seek and Receive
Information, Within the Law



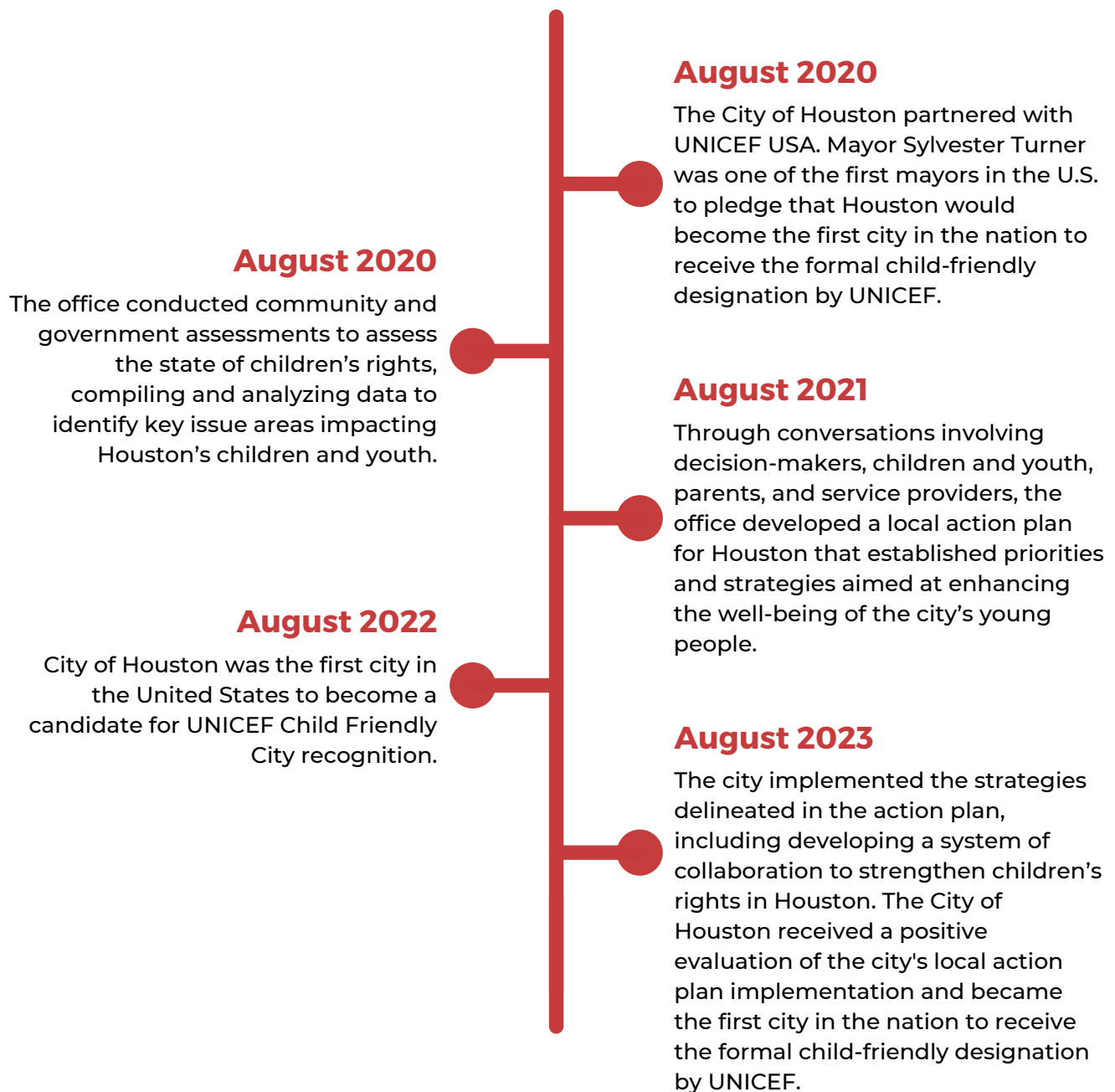
Meet with Other Children
and Join Organizations.

The headlining project that the office has undertaken is the Child Friendly Cities Initiative, a significant undertaking in collaboration with UNICEF. The Child Friendly Cities Initiative serves as a framework for municipal governments to advance the realization of children's rights at the local level, with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as its bedrock. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, an international treaty devoted to ensuring the fulfillment of children's rights, provides a comprehensive foundation for this initiative.

In a groundbreaking achievement for the City of Houston, in August 2023, the office proudly secured the distinction of becoming the first Child-Friendly City in the United States. This remarkable designation reflects a comprehensive and rigorous process undertaken by the city to align with the principles and goals of the Child Friendly Cities Initiative.



This process involved a concerted effort to integrate the CRC into local policies, practices, and programs, ensuring that the rights of every child within the city's boundaries are upheld and respected. Houston's pioneering achievement as a Child-Friendly City serves as an inspiring example for other municipalities across the nation, highlighting the potential for positive change when children's rights are embraced and implemented at the local level.



The plan crafted and executed by the Mayor's Office of Education and Youth Engagement to secure the recognition incorporated city-level theories of change that emphasize child-friendly governance and city-wide strategies aimed at enhancing the well-being of all children and young people in Houston. Rooted in the outcomes of the local situational analysis, this comprehensive Action Plan outlined the priority issues identified through community and governmental assessments.





The priorities identified through collaboration with local youth and stakeholders underscored the urgent need to enhance resource accessibility, emergency preparedness, and mental health services for young residents.

The situational analysis also pinpointed youth engagement as an area in need of significant improvement in the City of Houston. Under the mayor's strategic plan for public safety, youth support and development opportunities have been firmly embedded. The city boasts a diverse array of youth programs dedicated to fostering the healthy development of children. To further this mission, the Mayor's Office of Education and Youth Engagement has appointed a Youth Engagement Manager, with plans to hire a second, who will operate within the office to drive the implementation of programs aimed at ensuring Houston's status as a safe, equitable, just, inclusive, and youth-responsive city.

The establishment of the City of Houston Youth Ambassadors during the community assessment process represents a vital component of Houston's commitment to amplifying youth voices in the city's programs and decision-making processes. Members of this ambassadorship have been afforded the opportunity to actively engage in discussions and participate in service projects dedicated to advocating for local children's rights while addressing the priority issues outlined in the Action Plan. The Ambassador's collaborative efforts with city and community leaders have led to impactful youth-led projects.



Youth Ambassadors Accomplishments

-  The Ambassadorship is in its third cohort.
-  Analyzed data and developed program and policy recommendations for a Youth and Family Report on how to address youth challenges.
-  Advised on design for the Houston CFCI Action Plan, provided feedback, and supported the development and implementation of strategies listed.
-  Served on the intergenerational committee to develop the Houston Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights.

The Mayor's Office of Education and Youth Engagement's commitment to youth engagement extends to the Youth Advocacy Training Series, a vital initiative designed to empower young individuals to advocate for the issues that matter most to them and equip them with the tools to initiate change within their communities.

The primary objectives of these trainings include instilling confidence in youth to express themselves and engage in constructive dialogues with adults about their concerns. Participants are guided on becoming effective public speakers, sharing their personal stories, and harnessing their voices as catalysts for meaningful change. Moreover, youth are guided through the transformative process of translating their ideas into collective action, ensuring that their voices result in tangible impact.

Another part of this multifaceted approach to amplifying youth voices and fostering advocacy, the city proudly introduces "Another Step for Youth," a youth-led podcast dedicated to raising awareness and fostering discussions on the efforts in Houston to advance children's rights. Created in collaboration with the Youth Ambassadors, this podcast comprises seven episodes, each focusing on a different goal area outlined in the action plan.



These episodes facilitate intergenerational conversations between youth and esteemed community and city leaders, providing a platform for the exchange of ideas, insights, and perspectives. Each episode, crafted and hosted by the youth ambassadors, explores key areas of the Child Friendly City Initiative, aligning with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children.

Topics include safety, inclusion, youth participation, equitable social services, and leisure environments. The podcast's objectives are to amplify youth voices, empower them to advocate for their community, and encourage their involvement in child rights organizations. Featured guests include leaders from diverse organizations, emphasizing collaborative discussions on advancing child welfare in Houston.

The official podcast launch was held on December 8th at City Hall. During the launch, members of the City of Houston Youth Ambassadors participated in a panel discussion about child rights, and other topics related to the podcast.



The Youth Ambassadors also took proactive steps to promote youth participation and encourage them to voice their concerns regarding access to mental health support.

They organized and hosted "Mental Health in Schools: Youth-led Discussion", by youth, for youth" workshops. These workshops served as a platform for open dialogue, enabling youth to share their experiences, gather data on their peers' experiences with mental health in schools, discuss ongoing initiatives in school districts, and provide valuable feedback to improve youth mental health support.

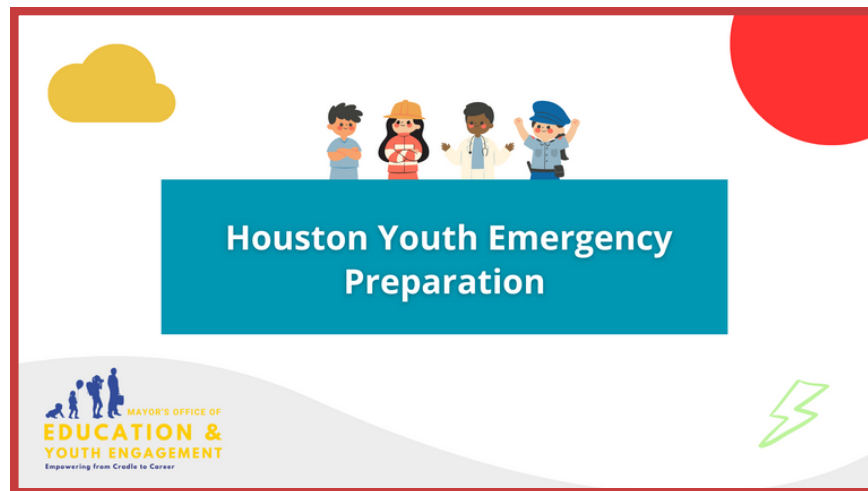
The action plan also highlighted the pressing need to improve the rights of children during times of emergency and natural disasters. The situational analysis underscored the increased vulnerability of children when faced with emergencies, shedding light on the critical requirement for child-centered emergency preparedness information and enhanced resource accessibility throughout all phases of emergencies, including preparation, response, and recovery. Recognizing these gaps, the Mayor's Office of Education and Youth Engagement set its sights on addressing emergency preparedness and resource accessibility through effective communication campaigns and youth participation programs.



To gain a deeper understanding of the level of preparedness among Houston's youth and identify specific areas requiring attention in disaster preparation, response, and recovery, the office initiated an emergency preparedness pilot survey. The survey results were presented to city and county leaders involved in emergency management. During this presentation, the office proposed recommendations to bolster emergency preparedness among youth and solicited feedback on the subsequent steps. One crucial aspect highlighted was the necessity of communication campaigns and resources that convey relevant and age-appropriate content.

Furthermore, the Mayor's Office of Education and Youth Engagement compiled an Emergency Preparedness Report, drawing from the findings of the Emergency Preparedness Survey and the broader situational analysis. This report shares insights into teen emergency preparation, incorporating input gathered from the Youth Voice Workshops and student and teacher focus groups on the Teen Cert Program—a key emergency preparation initiative for youth in Houston. This knowledge offers a valuable foundation for city leaders and service providers to develop an emergency preparedness plan tailored specifically to children and youth, enhancing their sense of safety and readiness during emergency situations.

In a proactive step to bridge the information gaps identified through the Teen Emergency Preparedness Pilot Survey, the office facilitated an emergency preparedness communication campaign.



The emergency preparedness campaign is target at youth ages 13-18. This youth-led campaign aimed to increase youth participation in emergency preparedness and provide easily accessible and youth-friendly information and resources. The youth ambassadors played an integral role in its development, creating infographics, videos, and presentations. Collaborating closely with the Harris County Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, and other stakeholders in youth emergency preparedness, the MOEYE actively promoted the campaign materials across various online platforms, including social media channels and city websites. This comprehensive approach demonstrates Houston's commitment to ensuring the safety and preparedness of its young population, particularly during times of crisis.



It has been a very insightful experience; this was my first time working with the government and it was really gratifying seeing all the youth we could connect with. I met so many wonderful youth and adults who were all on the same wavelength and it was nice to be on a team where we all had the same goal: to make life more gentle for the kids in our community.

Youth Participant



I feel inspired of knowing other people who advocated for issues despite being so young.

Youth Participant



My favorite part of being on the committee was interacting and discussing issues with peers and coming up with agreeable solutions.

Youth Participant

Milestones



700

Service providers, Educators, Community Members, and Parents Received Youth Designed Training



600

Youth & Community Members and

40

Community Organizations Engaged in Situational Analysis



300+

Youth Applied to the Youth Ambassador Program

100%

of Respondents Reported They Would Recommend the Trainings



106

Participants Attended Youth Advocacy Trainings

7

Youth Led Podcasts Recorded



2

Full-time Youth Engagement Managers Hired



Youth Leadership Opportunities

Youth leadership is a key factor in shaping a vibrant and progressive society. Empowering young individuals with opportunities to practice and learn about leadership not only enhances their personal growth but also contributes significantly to the community and the world.

The Office of Education and Youth Engagement recognizes the pivotal role of youth leadership in shaping a prosperous and harmonious society and provides multiple avenues for young individuals to practice and learn about leadership.



Mo wasn't born with any super powers or special leadership skills, and yes, he might be a regular guy with a cape and lantern, but Mo is a leader. He is always looking to improve his leadership skills, which is what a good leader does. After all, a leader can be anyone. All it takes is a little courage and the desire to light the way for others. The rest can be learned along the way. The little blue arrow is Flech. and he's always by Mo's side, helping him show the way!

Leadership opportunities provide young people with a platform to build essential life skills, such as effective communication, problem-solving, decision-making, and teamwork. Without these experiences, they may struggle to develop these vital abilities, which are crucial not only for their future success but also for becoming active, engaged citizens.

Furthermore, the absence of leadership opportunities can lead to a lack of self-confidence and self-esteem among youth. When they are not entrusted with responsibilities or given the chance to make decisions, they may doubt their abilities and feel undervalued. This can have a lasting impact on their self-image and hinder their ability to advocate for themselves and their ideas.

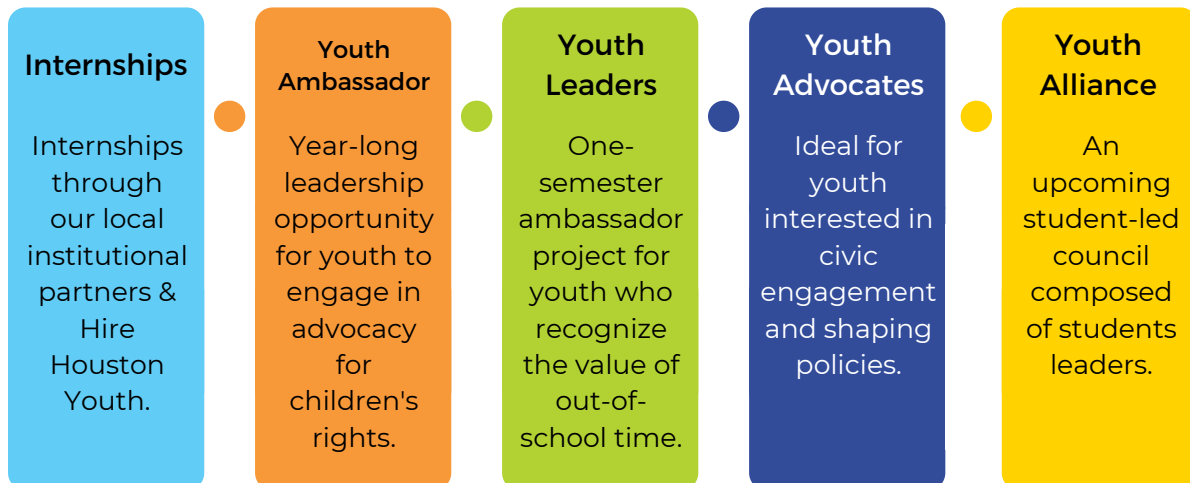
Moreover, a lack of youth leadership opportunities can contribute to disengagement from civic life. If young people do not see avenues for active participation and influence in their communities, they are less likely to become civically engaged adults. This disengagement can have long-term consequences for the democratic process, as it may result in a generation of individuals who feel disconnected from the decision-making processes that affect their lives.

On a broader societal level, denying youth leadership opportunities can lead to missed innovations and fresh perspectives. Young people often bring unique insights, creativity, and fresh ideas to the table. By excluding them from leadership roles, society misses out on the potential contributions they could make to solving pressing issues and driving positive change.

Youth leadership opportunities in local government are vital not only for the present but also for fostering the development of future leaders. These opportunities empower young individuals to actively contribute to decision-making processes, providing them with valuable real-world experience in the realm of governance. Moreover, it promotes diversity and inclusivity in policy-making by ensuring that the perspectives and concerns of the younger generation are considered in shaping the future of their communities.



In essence, investing in youth leadership within local government is an investment in a more dynamic, inclusive, and innovative society, where the voices and talents of young leaders play a pivotal role in shaping a brighter future for all. The youth leadership opportunities made available through the Mayor's Office of Education and Youth Engagement include:



While we've previously discussed internships offered through the Hire Houston Youth program, it's important to highlight that the Mayor's Office of Education and Youth Engagement goes a step further by partnering with both public and private institutions to expand internship opportunities for enrolled students. Many of these interns display a keen interest in governance and public service, and as a result, they have the unique chance to intern not only within the Mayor's Office itself but also in various other departments within the City of Houston.

These hands-on experiences provide valuable insights into the workings of local government, allowing young individuals to apply their knowledge in practical settings and gain a deeper understanding of civic leadership and policymaking. These opportunities not only nurture the next generation of civic leaders but also contribute to a more informed and engaged youth population in Houston.

As previously discussed, the Youth Engagement pillar prominently features programs like the Ambassador Program, offering young individuals a year-long leadership opportunity to actively advocate for children's rights and engage in meaningful civic activities. In addition to this, another noteworthy initiative is the Out to Learn program, which is an integral part of the Extracurricular Activities pillar.

This program, too, fosters youth leadership but with a distinct focus on expanding educational and recreational opportunities for young people. These young leaders are deeply committed to promoting equity and increasing accessibility to such crucial services for all Houston families. The opportunity seeks to empower youth in gaining a deeper understanding of the unequal allocation of resources and services within the city by identifying out-of-school deserts, areas lacking adequate access to these vital programs.



Throughout this dynamic project, these young leaders receive invaluable coaching and support from the Mayor's Office of Education and Youth Engagement staff, ensuring that their efforts are guided effectively over the course of approximately 14 weeks. Together, these initiatives showcase the Mayor's Office of Education and Youth Engagement's multifaceted approach to empowering and engaging youth, ensuring their voices are heard and their leadership potential is nurtured across various spheres of community involvement and advocacy.



My internship has been a grand learning experience for me, not only because of the wide range of clients but because of my coworkers as well. I'm not very social with new people, but my coworkers took the opportunity to break me out of my shell and get to know the real me.

Youth Participant



Participating in the O2L Youth Leaders Project was eye-opening as I learned of the various out-of-school time programs Houston offers its residents. I am thankful to have been entrusted to complete these assignments and contribute both to O2L and CFCI.

Youth Participant



If I ever see a problem that I want solved, I'll know the steps on who I need to go to and what the process may look like.

Youth Participant



Milestones



\$16,000

Grant Secured for Honorariums to Active Participants of the Youth Leaders Project



42

Interns Hosted From

5

Private and Public Institutions



800+

Out of School Opportunities Identified by Out 2 Learn Youth Leaders

500+

Youth Applied to Leadership Opportunities



146

Active Youth Participated in Ambassador Program

11

High School Students Engaged as Nature Youth Advocates






25

Youth Participated in Health Advocate Program

Impact in Complete Communities

The Mayor's Office of Education and Youth Engagement's top 7 accomplishments linked to achieving the goals set forth in the action plans for the Complete Communities initiative include the below.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT:

GOAL	PROJECTS	PRIORITY
Nurture Leaders	Provide civic leadership training	
	Develop youth leaders	
	Build leadership capacity	

- 100 Houston youth have participated in the Youth Ambassador program, a year-long leadership opportunity to engage in advocacy for children's rights and champion change for the City of Houston, 35 program participants were from Complete Communities. | \$65,000, 2021 – 2023, Private Corporation
 - Alief: 22 youth participants
 - Gulfton: 10 youth participants
 - Sunnyside: 3 youth participants



ECONOMY AND JOBS:

GOAL	PROJECTS	PRIORITY
Expand Workforce Training and Resources	Provide employment opportunities for youth	

- 20,080 job and internships opportunities were offered to Houston youth in 2023, 4,292 of which were from Complete Communities. | \$531,000, 2022 – 2023, Grant & Private Funders
 - Acres Home: 425 job and internship opportunities

- Alief-Westwood: 618 job and internship opportunities
- Fort Bend Houston: 226 job and internship opportunities
- Magnolia Park – Manchester: 232 job and internship opportunities
- Gulfton: 612 job and internship opportunities
- Kashmere Gardens: 415 job and internship opportunities
- Near Northside: 421 job and internship opportunities
- Second Ward: 248 job and internship opportunities
- Sunnyside: 604 job and internship opportunities
- Third Ward: 491 job and internship opportunities

EDUCATION:

GOAL	PROJECTS	PRIORITY
Provide Quality Education for Learners of All Ages	Expand out of school programs for children and youth (after school and summer)	
	Expand and improve quality early childhood education	

3

867 new out-of-school (OST) and after-school opportunities identified, 221 of which are in Complete Communities. | **\$16,000, 2022 – 2023, Houston Endowment**

- Acres Home: 5 OST opportunities
- Alief-Westwood: 42 OST opportunities
- Fort Bend Houston: 3 OST opportunities
- Gulfton: 37 OST opportunities
- Kashmere Gardens: 18 OST opportunities
- Magnolia Park – Manchester: 16 OST opportunities
- Near Northside: 17 OST opportunities
- Second Ward: 8 OST opportunities
- Sunnyside: 37 OST opportunities
- Third Ward: 38 OST opportunities

4


4 tuition-free preschools were established throughout Houston, 2 of which were placed directly in Complete Communities and 1 that was placed adjacent.

- Direct
 - Sunnyside: New Hope Housing Reed Family Center, 2605 Reed Rd Houston, TX 77051

- Magnolia Park – Manchester: Community Family Centers building, 7524 Ave E, Houston, TX 77012
- Adjacent
 - Kashmere Gardens: Denver Harbor Multi-Service Center, 6402 Market St., Houston, TX 77020

GOAL	PROJECTS	PRIORITY
Develop Strong School-Community Partnerships	Improve communication between schools, partners, non-profit and private partners to enhance student success	

- 5** **26 high schools identified as focus schools**, MOEYE has been in regular communication with all schools and district partnerships have been forged in HISD and Alief ISD, **19 of the identified high schools were from complete communities.**
- Alief-Westwood: 8 High Schools (Alief Elsik HS, Alief Hastings HS, Alief Taylor HS, Crossroads HS, Alief Elsik Ninth Grade Center, Alief Hastings Ninth Grade Center, Alief Early College HS, and Alief Kerr HS)
 - Gulfton: 6 High Schools (Liberty HS, Bellaire HS, Jane Long/Las Americas, Middle College HS at HCC Gulfton, YES Prep Gulfton K-12, and KIPP Connect MS 9th-12th)
 - Kashmere: 1 High School (Kashmere HS)
 - Sunnyside: 4 High Schools (Evan Edward Worthing Early College HS, Energized for STEM Academy HS, South Early College HS and KIPP Sunnyside HS)

GOAL	PROJECTS	PRIORITY
Connected Parents and Thriving Students	Expand access to computers, tablets, and broadband internet	

- 6** **26 local high schools** awarded new dell laptops impacting over **120 diverse seniors**, **10 of the high schools belonged to a Complete Community**. | **\$1,000,000, 2021 – 2023, Coca-Cola Southwest Beverages**
- Acres Home: 3 High Schools, 15 laptops (Carver HS for Applied Technology, Engineering, and Arts, Eisenhower HS, and Victory Early College HS)
 - Alief-Westwood: 1 High School, 6 laptops (Alief Elsik HS)
 - Gulfton: 2 High Schools, 6 laptops (Middle College HS at HCC Gulfton and Energized for STEM Academy)

- Kashmere Gardens: 1 High School, 6 laptops (Kashmere HS)
- Second Ward: 2 High Schools, 9 laptops (East Early College HS and Middle College at Felix Fraga)
- Third Ward: 1 High School, 6 laptops (Yates HS)

HEALTH:

GOAL	PROJECTS	PRIORITY
Healthy and Supported Community	Expand and connect residents to mental health care	

- 7

In partnership with Mental Health of America-Houston, delivered Emotional Backpack Training to **350 mental health counselors working in 174 schools**. | **\$158,129.28**,



The City of Houston

Education & Youth Engagement

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moedu@houstontx.gov

